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OSMOND,

A TALE.

BY THE AUTHOR

OF

“THE FAVOURITE OF NATURE.”

Mary Ann Kelly

“ Evil and strong seducing passions prey
On soaring minds, and win them from their way ;
Who then to Vice the subject spirits give,
And in the service of the conqueror live ;
Like captive Sampson making sport for all,
Who fear'd their strength, and glory in their fall.”---CRABBE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

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LONDON:

PRINTED BY COX AND BAYLIS, GREAT QUEEN STREET,
LINCOLN'S-INN FIELDS.

TO LADY DACRE.

M A D A M,

I dedicated my former work to your friend, MRS. JOANNA BAILLIE, from a sincere admiration of her talents.

The same reason has induced me to request permission to dedicate these volumes to your Ladyship.

Unknown to her, and unknown to you, I may have been somewhat presumptuous ; but I hope to be forgiven for having addressed myself to those, whose favour is calculated to do so much honour to my production, and

to whom it is so great a pleasure to express obligation.

With the utmost respect, permit me to acknowledge myself,

Your Ladyship's very obliged

and obedient humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

OSMOND.

CHAP. I.

“ It does not signify, Lady Arlington,” said the Earl to his Countess, as they were one evening returning home from dining with a neighbouring nobleman, “ but if Osmond does not return in the course of this week, I will go and fetch him myself.

“ It is very strange indeed what he can be about at that stupid place,” replied her Ladyship.

“ Strange !” returned the Earl ; “ it is absolutely mysterious. To bury himself alive for half a year together, in a miserable muddy village in the north, that nobody would set their foot in, except perhaps, for the sake of a fortnight’s shooting in the grouse season ; and there to remain, in defiance of entreaties, and expostulations, and even commands ; I cannot understand it, but I soon will,” continued his Lordship, in a determined tone ; “ if he does not answer my last letter very soon in person, he will receive a visitor, I can assure him, not of the most agreeable kind.”

A heavy sigh was Lady Arlington’s only reply.

It was heard and sympathized with, by the gentlest of human beings, who,

pensively reclined in one corner of the carriage, had, though silent, been as deeply interested in the conversation as either of the others.

Affectionately laying her hand upon that of the Countess, and speaking in a voice that nature had modulated to the sweetest tones of persuasiveness and love, "I have a presentiment that we shall soon see him, dear Lady Arlington," she said; "and if not, if he does play truant a little longer, we all know how difficult it would be for my Lord to be seriously displeased with Osmond."

"Indeed Lady Ellen you are mistaken," replied his Lordship; "I am already excessively offended with him; he has mortified my expectations—disappointed my hopes."

“ Oh, surely, my Lord, you judge him a little too severely,” said Lady Ellen, hastily interrupting him ; “ I cannot doubt but that he will justify your warmest wishes—your fondest expectations.”

“ God grant he may,” said Lady Arlington with fervour ; “ but he is such an impetuous creature ! Oh, Ellen !” she continued, with rising emotion, “ the anxiety that I have felt on that boy’s account !”

“ He will repay it, my dear friend—I know that he will repay it all,” replied Lady Ellen, tenderly ; “ think of his noble disposition, his affectionate feelings—”

“ Ah, but those feelings are mingled with others, Ellen, that often make me tremble for his happiness.”

“ Alas ! this is but too true,” said Lady Ellen to herself with a deep sigh.

“ To think now of his being out of the way this whole summer,” said Lord Arlington, suddenly breaking from a reverie, and seeming to give words to his thoughts rather than to address himself to any one, “ when Lord Eustace, Mr. Belford, Sir William Copeland, and other leading men, high in power, high in public opinion, men that every body talks of, were in the neighbourhood, and I had an opportunity of introducing him to them all—it really is too provoking ! Do you not think Lady Ellen,” he added, “ that it is quite enough to occasion misery to any father ?”

Lady Ellen could conceive the possibility of much more overpowering

afflictions to a parent ; but she nevertheless replied with her accustomed gentleness, “ It was a pity, indeed, that Osmond’s talents and advantages were not properly known and appreciated ”

“ But they never will be, I foresee that,” replied his Lordship ; “ his abominable capricious temper will always stand in the way of his advancement. Who but himself, after such a career at the University, gaining prizes, and distinguishing himself upon all occasions as a young man of the finest talents,—who but he, I say, would, just at the very period of life when he ought to be pushing his way in the world, and making himself acquainted with public business and public men, be seized all at once with a love of retirement—desire of solitude—fondness for

a country life—and such preposterous whims—I declare I was quite ashamed when Lord Eustace asked me to-day at dinner, ‘ what was become of Mr. Lessingham ?’ to be obliged to answer that he was still at my sporting box in the north.”

“ And what can he be doing so long there ?” said my Lord ; “ establishing an intrigue with the gamekeeper’s daughter, or being sentimental with the dairy-maid ?”

“ A very pretty, respectable sort of surmise this !” continued his Lordship, very angrily, “ to be made upon the conduct of a young man of family !”

To the great comfort of Lady Ellen, the further ebullitions of Lord Arlington’s wrath were interrupted by their arrival at home. Pleading fatigue, she

retired almost immediately to her own apartment. Her heart was not at rest, and she wanted to be alone.

“ Another day is gone,” she said, as she threw herself into a chair, “ and he comes not ! There is something mysterious in this continued absence. Oh, Osmond ! is it possible that my hopes have deceived me ? is it possible that you can have fallen from those high, those very high ideas I had formed of you ? ”

She rose, and with agitated steps took two or three turns up and down the room. She stopped before a small casket, and opening it, she took out a miniature ; she hung over it for many minutes with pensive smiles. “ Are not these the features of virtue itself ? ” she said ; “ did nature ever stamp upon

the human countenance such legible traces of nobility of soul?" and with the devotion of female tenderness she pressed her lips upon the picture ; but though in absolute solitude, the blush of virgin modesty suffused her cheek at this involuntary action, and she cast a hurried glance around, as if shrinking at the bare idea of being observed. If any eyes had witnessed this impulse of the purest love that ever warmed a woman's breast, they would have found, in looking at the picture she held in her hand, something of its excuse.

It was the portrait of a young man apparently about twenty years of age. The majesty of the open brow, the searching glance, the soul of the dark eye, the slight curl of the expressive mouth, just slightly indicating the su-

perior mind's discernment, and contempt of the nothingness of humanity; might perhaps have characterized the countenance of one more advanced in life; but that the smiling ingenuousness of youth still lingered on the glowing cheek, and mantled through the brilliant tints of the complexion; whilst on the noble forehead, the visible throne of intelligence, not a trace of care or thought had as yet interrupted its smooth and polished whiteness.

“ Alas that he should ever alter,” she exclaimed, breaking suddenly from the contemplation that absorbed her.—

“ That these beautiful lineaments *must* be furrowed and defaced in the mental war, I too truly anticipate for him! Oh pity—pity,”—but tears interrupted her, and she sat down and gave them

free indulgence. Her thoughts reverted to moments of past happiness—golden moments—gone she feared for ever! That period, only one short year since, dear to her remembrance as three months of uninterrupted felicity—for they were months passed in the society of Osmond, when the tenderness which even from his boyhood, her distant relationship, and as his father's ward, her intimate connexion with his family, had long permitted her to feel for Osmond, first melted into passion, and stamped a destiny, not otherwise highly favoured, with its last and deepest impression.

Lady Ellen Seymour was one of those beings who seem to have been created to shew how well they can suffer. Educated by a morose and unfeeling mother,

the exquisite sensibility of her own nature must have been nipt in the bud, but for the affection of the fondest of fathers, whose unbounded love for her, made, to her religious and well ordered mind, a more than just compensation for the austerity of her other parent. Her first trial was the loss of this dear father, at a period too, when his life, always so invaluable to her, was more than ever wanted to protect her, by his authority, from being persecuted by a young and very dissolute nobleman, who solicited at that time her hand, and whose addresses were unfortunately approved of by the Countess her mother ; his rank and riches sufficiently extenuating his faults, and proving a passport to the favour of a lady, whose chief

ambition was to have her daughter early and well established—or, in other words, *off her hands*.

But the firmness of Lady Ellen, supported as it was by a species of consolation of which the Countess knew nothing beyond the name, sustained her through some very trying scenes, in which she frequently had to endure the unjust reproaches of an irritated mother, who at the very moment this excellent child was sacrificing the hours of gaiety and recreation which her station in society, as well as her youth entitled her to enjoy, for the sake of sharing in the retirement to which the declining health of the Countess condemned her, seldom lost an occasion of overwhelming her with accusations, declaring she must have a design to shorten her days by

breaking her heart with her obstinacy in refusing the match she was set upon her making. At length an intermission of suffering arrived in the sudden decease of the Countess, but not till the health of Lady Ellen, always delicate, had been so much undermined by mental agitation and confinement, as to bereave her of all that elasticity and flow of spirits, which ought to be the characteristic of youth.

The first bloom of this delightful period indeed was past, when her mother died. At that time she had just entered her twenty-second year.

Without any pretensions to beauty, her countenance was peculiarly distinguished by that "something than beauty dearer," which strikes upon the heart rather than the eye. To have

known her intimately without loving her, would scarcely have been possible. In the humblest situation of life, the gentleness of her address, the pensive sweetness of her manners, borrowing from her invariable contentment under the pressure of almost constant indisposition, a character of resignation that enveloped her with something that had "less of earth in it than heaven," must have exerted a powerful influence over the affections of those that surrounded her; but when united to the adventitious circumstances of rank, and talents, and accomplishments, they combined to produce a being irresistibly fitted to charm. The connexion between Lady Ellen's family and that of Lord Arlington, which just admitted their calling each other cousins, had been productive of a great

intimacy between them. Her chief delight, and, in her mother's life-time, her only relaxation, was in passing a month now and then with Lady Arlington; to whose tender affection and religious counsels, she gratefully acknowledged herself, under heaven, principally indebted, for the mental peace which, under all the trials that had visited her, she could still pronounce her own. At the death of her mother, she for a short time took up her residence with this kind friend; but the temper of Lord Arlington, irritable and impetuous, was not of a sort to render his house an agreeable habitation. Her delicate health, and quiet habits, with the consideration of her being left with a fortune, which for her situation could be called but small (the principal part of

the family estates going with the title to a distant branch), induced her to indulge her prevailing taste in the choice of some retirement, where, in the luxury of doing good, cultivating her mind, and finally preparing herself for that happier country, which her fragile constitution seemed to indicate the probability of her prematurely approaching, she might make to herself all the happiness, it appeared to be her destiny, in this world, at least, to enjoy.

At a beautiful little villa near Richmond, known better to the poor and distressed than the rich and great, with whom she passed as “*a singular young woman, of strange, out-of-the-way notions,*” Lady Ellen had for the last three years resided; varying her calm routine of existence, by generally, in

the summer months, accompanying the Arlington family to a watering place, or passing that period with them at their seat in Kent.

She was now making her annual visit at Arlington Park. She was just come, full of tender hopes and bright expectations, anticipating the possibility of such another happy summer as the last had been, when Osmond, having completed his college career, had for a short period taken up his constant abode at home, and being immediately thrown into her society, seemed to have surrendered himself not an unwilling captive to her unobtrusive attractions. But the sweet visions that so long had cheered her solitude, and floated day and night before her fancy, she now trembled to believe were *only* visions, doomed to

fade away into empty air, leaving behind them nothing real, but the tears and sighs with which she watched their disappearance. "Yet Osmond is not to blame," she said, dispersing the drops that trickled down her cheeks. "No, no, he never professed to love me; it was this treacherous, foolish heart that betrayed me, and still I indulge its weakness—but how difficult to refrain. I ought not to look upon you," she continued, resuming the picture; "I ought not to have sought the possession of you; you were obtained by deception, and when have I ever found joy in gazing upon you?"

The indiscretion she thus severely arraigned was not of a very heinous kind. The temptation of having a picture of Osmond copied from one

Lady Arlington had consigned to her care to be properly framed in London, had been too strong to be resisted. It had been given to her charge for that purpose the preceding year, just as she was returning to Richmond, from spending the delightful summer already alluded to.

Truly indeed could she say that since that time she had found little pleasure in looking upon it, for ever since she had been a stranger to the sight of Osmond. Instead of pursuing the friendship he delighted to acknowledge, and had repeatedly claimed of her in return, he had been absent and lost to her from the day they parted ; and not only to her, but to his parents. Under the plea of pursuing his field sports in the first instance, and latterly, of prosecuting his

studies, Osmond Lessingham had secluded himself at an old hunting box belonging to the Earl, seldom or never frequented by him or any of his family, till, as we have seen, the anger of his father at his determined opposition to his will, in continuing there without any sufficient excuse, threatened to approach him in the most decided manner.

It was not without some cause that the old Earl bewailed the uncommon and unaccountable passion for retirement, which had, all at once, taken possession of his second son, to whose very superior abilities, and extraordinary natural advantages of every kind, he had with justifiable hopes looked for the advancement of his family. His eldest son, Lord Lessingham, was in fact, so weak in intellect, as to preclude

any expectation of his distinguishing himself in the world. He had been dispatched abroad with a tutor to take care of him, and was as much forgotten by his father as if he had never had any existence. Lord Lessingham himself took very little pains to keep up an interest in the hearts of his family, never intruding upon them with letters, except when he wanted money ; and all that could then be said in favour of his communications, was, that they spoke to the point and nothing else.

But Osmond, frank, ardent, and affectionate, was the secret joy of his father, the idol of his mother. It was but when the burst of those impetuous passions, which so often mingle with the noblest gifts of heaven, broke occasionally forth, that the mother's anxious heart died

within her, as imagination tracked his path through life—the brilliant course of a comet, full of sparkling fire and heat, but threatening ruin and devastation to all within its influence. Warm, grateful, and confiding, it is scarcely possible to describe the devoted attachment, the reverence which Osmond bore to his mother. The uncomplaining temper which enabled her to sustain patiently his father's violence of manner, the mild persuasiveness with which she had always sought to imprint upon her son's mind those divine doctrines, the sublimity of which she herself so truly felt, and invariably acted upon, her overflowing tenderness, and consideration for all the faults that sprung from his enthusiastic character and fiery temperament, had so sanctified her

in the affection of Osmond, that he regarded her as a creature little less than holy.

Next to her, his utmost respect and brotherly love were given to Lady Ellen, whom he always pronounced to be his mother's counterpart. Four years his senior, she had been his friend and counsellor, and not unfrequently his assistant, in extricating him from some of the careless follies, into which his gay, volatile disposition had, as a boy, sometimes betrayed him.

Though the most faithful and attached of friends, a thought of any warmer sentiment than fraternal love had, of course, never entered his mind, and scarcely her's, when at eighteen he bade adieu to his dear Lady Ellen, and entered the University.

There, for three years, he pursued an honourable course; the perfect gentleman in all his habits, the man of intellect and taste in all his pursuits. A visit to the Continent, and other summer engagements, had precluded his seeing Lady Ellen from his first arrival there till his final return from College, the preceding year, when he found her visiting at his father's house.

That period had made but small alteration in her. The same gentle repose of feature, the same matchless symmetry of form, graceful in every movement as the mind it enshrined, the same interesting delicacy of health, the same quiet, elegant manners, the same lady-like softness of speech and address, for a time met his observation only as the attractions of a dear and charming sister.

But Osmond was not now a thoughtless, volatile boy. Just at that susceptible period of life, when the heart seems to demand the indulgence of new and more endearing sympathies, it was scarcely possible for him daily and intimately to enjoy the society of such a woman as Lady Ellen Seymour, without yielding in some degree to the impression her modest graces were calculated to make upon the feelings of any man of taste.

But it was an impression pleasing rather than vivid, partaking of the nature of the object that inspired it ; what it might have become, under a continuance of their present circumstances, cannot be known ; for at the very moment Osmond first began to consider the pleasure he was finding in the morn-

ing rides and evening walks he constantly took with her, and to ask himself seriously, if he knew very well what he was about, he was more austere called to decide upon his conduct, by receiving an intimation from his father, that it would be agreeable to him to see him devoting himself a little less to Lady Ellen Seymour, and a little more to the Lady Jane Eustace; a dashing young woman of high fashion, whom Osmond had no objection to talk nonsense to, but a most insuperable aversion from, in any serious point of view.

Thus divided by contending feelings, he resolved upon what, in the existing state of things, he considered as a wise measure; and taking himself out of the way of both ladies at once, under a pretence of sporting in the North, he

repaired to Woodhurst, where he still remained. The tenderness of his nature could not exempt him from betraying something of attachment in his parting with Lady Ellen, when he solemnly demanded her friendship, and as solemnly pledged his own in return. But in justice to his honour it must not be suppressed, that beyond this calm and sacred sentiment, he had never professed anything. Aware of his father's ambitious views for him, and aware himself that he had a distaste to being fettered at so early an age by irrevocable engagements, and that, however pleased, he was still not sufficiently *in love* to depend upon the stability of the sentiments he at present entertained, he felt, though dejected at the loss of her society, still in some measure relieved

at being, in a manner, compelled to forego it.

These were the sentiments of Osmond. Shall we turn to the contemplation of the devoted creature he left? Shall we?—But no, it is unnecessary. We have seen her at the expiration of a twelvemonth musing upon his picture, and bedewing it with tears. We have heard her, whilst her tender bosom is still smarting with its wounds, endeavouring to exculpate him from blame: and now let us view her once again, ere she closes that beloved resemblance, and consigns it to its casket, imprinting on it another fond warm kiss; and then, she raises her eyes, and an ejaculation for his health and happiness is lifted up to Him, who sees and pities the struggle of her resignation and her love.

CHAP. II.



THE following day produced a scene of great agitation at Arlington Park.

A letter from a medical man in the vicinity of Woodhurst, contained a melancholy excuse for the neglect of Osmond in obeying his father's commands. It represented him as having long suffered under a violent fever, from which he was, indeed, recovering, though incapable of writing himself, beyond a postscript, which was addressed to his mother in a feeble hand, evidently a task of pain and difficulty, undertaken only to allay the fears of

that anxious parent, by confirming himself the assurances of his medical attendant, that all danger was past ; and that nothing but extreme weakness retarded his immediate return, which he promised should be at the expiration of a week, if possible.

“ I thought how it would be, I could have sworn to it,” exclaimed Lord Arlington, as he read Osmond’s postscript, which helped to recover him from the horror that had overpowered him at the first perusal of this communication. “ I thought he would go and destroy himself in some way or other, at that d—d place. This fever will end in a consumption, there is no doubt of that.”

“ Oh, my good Lord, have some pity,” exclaimed Lady Ellen, glancing at the agitated Countess ; “ my dearest

Lady Arlington!" and she took her hand, and pressed it fondly to her heart, though wanting herself the comfort she would have imparted.

"Dear Ellen! my sweetest comforter!" said Lady Arlington, smiling upon her through her tears, "what are the sorrows your gentle sympathy cannot ameliorate! But, my Lord," she continued with eagerness, "let us not lose a moment; let us go to him directly; let us order the carriage instantly," and she sprung towards the bell.

"No, no," replied he, intercepting her, and taking her hand with a tenderness, which was, in fact, a part of his nature, though strangely stifled and suppressed; "I will not have *you* go, Frances; there is no occasion for your

seeking such unnecessary fatigue and anxiety ; I will go myself to this—" he paused a moment for an epithet.

" This dear son," said Lady Arlington ; " for he is as dear to you as to me—oh, let us both go ;" and she burst into fresh tears.

" No, no," he repeated, much affected, though striving against his emotion ; " *I* will hasten to him immediately, and bring him back to you : be comforted therefore. This kind Lady Ellen will take care of you, and keep you in spirits till we meet again. Be composed my love." As he said this, his Lordship hastened from the room, and in less than an hour was pursuing his way to the north, with as much rapidity as the speed of four horses could produce.

We shall pass over the interval of a week—a momentous interval to the two anxious hearts he left behind him ; but it was a space of time, the heaviness of which, to Lady Arlington, was greatly beguiled by the affectionate attentions of her amiable young friend ; who, only in the solitude of her chamber, permitted a moment's indulgence to her own fond solitudes. Letters from Lord Arlington of a satisfactory nature had, in due time, been received ; and at length came the one so much desired, announcing the capability of Osmond to undertake the journey, and a hope that on the fourth day from the date of his Lordship's epistle they might be expected to arrive at home.

On that day it was in vain for Lady Ellen to attempt to soothe the anxieties

of the Countess ; her own were too intense—they would not be subdued. She was going to see once more the being whose image, whether waking or sleeping, had for the space of a twelve-month scarcely an instant been absent from her mind. She pictured to herself how they would meet—not, she feared, as they had parted ! yet why should they not ? she was the same ! but Osmond ! was he not altered ? was there no mystery in his conduct ? Ah ! this long—this strange absence ! what could it mean ? Her alarmed imagination assured her that it was linked with something calculated to distress her.

“ I will not think about it,” she exclaimed ; “ I will think only that I am soon to see him again ; yet, senseless heart ! of what avail is that ! ”

In this variation of feeling the morning and the afternoon wore away, and doubts were beginning to disturb the pleasing anticipations of both Lady Arlington and herself, when the sound of carriage wheels sent the fond mother to the window, the agitated Ellen to her own apartment, from thence to steal a glimpse of the being, whose presence she felt it impossible to encounter, till she had taken a few minutes to fortify herself in retirement for that moment of emotion.

It was almost dusk, and in vain she looked to trace his well-known features ; but the outlines of his tall majestic figure she quickly recognized in the being, who with languid steps, and leaning on the arm of a servant, left the carriage, and proceeded towards the

house. “ It is himself ! ” she said, “ thank God for his safety ! But alas, how feeble and exhausted he seems—and I must not express a tenth part of the anxiety I feel for him. I must not propose myself to be his nurse and tender friend ; I must compose my features to the distant solicitude of maidenly reserve—I must receive him with kind and civil inquiries, not with these tears ; ” and she wiped them away—trying—but ah ! how vainly, trying to be tranquil.

More than a quarter of an hour had thus elapsed, when Miss Hopkins, her maid, announced herself by a tap at the door.

“ I am desired, my Lady, to say, that my Lord and Mr. Lessingham are returned, and will be happy to see you ;

but dear, my lady, I am afraid you have got those hysterical feelings coming on.” And Miss Hopkins began to make a prodigious bustle in searching for a specific, amongst the various essences and perfumes that ornamented the toilette. “No—no ; leave me, Hopkins ; I am quite well ; I shall be down directly :” and once more rousing herself with a vigorous and determined effort, she proceeded to the drawing-room.

The obscurity of the apartment, not yet lighted up, favoured her entrance, and prevented from becoming visible the deep blush that stole over the snowy fairness of her face and neck, as Osmond with a moment’s eagerness rose to meet her ; but, overcome with weakness and fatigue, he was compelled almost instantly to resume his seat.

“ My dear Ellen,” were his only words ; but he still retained her hand, and with gentle force constrained her to take her station by him on the sofa.

Her greeting from Lord Arlington, his account of their journey, and the joy of the Countess, which broke out in incessant inquiries of her son how he found himself after his journey, entreaties that he would retire speedily to rest, and doubts that he would be exhausted by remaining up, occupied, for a short time, so exclusively the conversation of all parties, that, beyond his first salutation, he was not allowed a moment to address himself to Lady Ellen. At length Lord Arlington rung for lights, and tea and coffee ; and the bustle that accompanied their bringing in, afforded that opportunity for speaking to her

more particularly, which she could not but believe that he, too, must, equally with herself, desire.

But he was still silent ; once only replying to the anxious look she cast upon his wasted form, and pale, hollow cheek, by saying,

“ I am altered since last we met, Ellen ; but I have suffered much since then.”

The word “ *suffered* ” was emphatically pronounced, and implied that something more than mere bodily disease was alluded to.”

“ But I hope, amongst us, we shall soon assist in completing your restoration to health, Osmond,” she replied—not immediately adding, “ and to spirits.”

He sighed deeply, but said nothing.

The request of Lady Arlington, that he would go to repose, was now se-

conded by that of his father ; and, seemingly incapable of sustaining any part in the discourse, he rose to comply with it.

Twice had Lord Arlington asked her, how she thought Osmond was looking, after he retired, before Lady Ellen could sufficiently recover from the strange variety of emotions that oppressed her, to make any intelligible reply.

That he really had been dangerously ill with a violent fever, was confirmed by Lord Arlington's account of the state in which he found him, and the medical man's history of his indisposition, which had been of some continuance before Osmond permitted his attendance. But the penetrating eye of female attachment had discovered in the glance of a moment, a sickness of the heart, fraught with much more danger and dismay.

It was not the dejection that accompanies want of health that she traced in his silent and altered manner ; it was an undefinable shrinking from observation, an indifference, and wearisomeness, that proclaimed him sated with existence, and ready to exclaim with Hamlet, “ How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable, seem to me all the uses of this world ! ” Again she found herself, during that hour of thoughtful meditation which ever preceded her retiring to rest, a prey to the deepest disquietude ; but, determined not to give herself wholly up to it, she took down the sacred volume, to which, in every state of feeling, she applied, as to a friend.

She found herself, as she always did, soothed and composed by the perusal of it. “ Oh ! my Father,” she exclaimed, as she lifted her eyes to Heaven, “ to

Thee I turn ! Remove from me these
vain and empty hopes, and fill my soul
with the love of Thee alone ! for Thou
wilt never deceive, or disappoint—be
Thou my all !”

CHAP. III.



FOR the space of a week, Osmond contrived, under a plea of continued illness, to keep himself almost entirely in his own apartment. At the end of that time, the opinions of his medical attendants being so much in his favour, as to declare that nothing but air and exercise, and cheerful society were necessary to complete his recovery, he found it difficult to produce an excuse for absenting himself any longer from the family.

But it was only when, in a manner, compelled by the affectionate entreaties

of his mother, that he could be prevailed upon to join them. A degree of wretchedness seemed to prey upon his heart, and turn him almost with loathing from the common intercourse of life. It had hitherto passed with all but Lady Ellen Seymour for the effects of indisposition; but she was not thus to be deceived. Her own interest in his affections, she believed, or fancied she believed, was gone; and the only hope that now remained to her was, that no obloquy, no dishonour had fallen upon the idol of her heart, to stain the glory with which it was the delight of her fond imagination to array him.

“ I could bear to mourn over his tomb,” she would often say to herself; “ I could weep away my own existence in tears for his loss; for joy would min-

gle with my tears in thinking of his eternal happiness, and trusting that we should meet again ; but never could I bear to see him fallen into low pursuits, and degrading vice, and fettered and subdued by grovelling passions."

All delightful expectations of the renewal of that enchanting intimacy, that exchange of taste and sentiment, that delicate and refined friendship, in which the preceding summer had made to itself such golden wings, and flown away, she, with a sigh, resigned. Not once had Osmond distinguished her from his mother, in the short and restrained meeting of the day ; not once had he solicited an evening walk, though the summer was at its height : and for hours it was his choice to wander about the park and grounds, re-

suming all those favourite haunts which it was impossible he could frequent without recurring to the remembrance of her, who had so often been his companion in them.

Thus did three weeks more pass away ; and Lord Arlington, convinced that his son's health was nearly as well established as ever, was now beginning to meet his determined avoidance of all company and engagements, rather as the effects of caprice than illness. His refusal to join him and the Countess, in accepting an invitation to a grand dinner and fête, which Lord Eustace at this time gave to all the principal people in his neighbourhood, had so much offended his Lordship, that a violent quarrel between them was the result ; Osmond's lofty temper ill sub-

mitting to the sort of school-boy lecturing which, certainly with bad taste, and worse skill, it was Lord Arlington's custom, when displeased, to address to the object of his anger.

He was not even to be wrought upon by the tender remonstrances of his mother and Lady Ellen, to oblige his father; but shutting himself up entirely in his own room, he took himself for that day as much as possible out of the notice of any one; and the Earl and his Lady were compelled to go without him. Lady Ellen's usually delicate health, had the advantage of furnishing her always with a plea for declining such invitations as were not calculated to afford her any gratification. In the present state of her mind, it would have been scarcely pos-

sible for any to promise her entertainment; she, therefore, at one end of the spacious mansion, and Osmond at the other, were, apparently, not likely to contribute, in any way, to enliven the solitude of each other.

She could not restrain the natural wish she felt to join him, when, towards the evening of a most delightful day, she saw him from her window, sauntering, the very personification of melancholy, in the park. But though the wish itself could not be repressed, her modest pride instantly checked the movement that would have hastened to its indulgence.

“I will not force myself upon his notice,” she said; “weak as I am I must not wholly forget what is due to myself.” And to beguile away that “fond deceiver,” that memory which recalled

to her mind the many hours, in such a night as this, that she had wandered with him through these very shades, she went to the piano-forte, and sought to amuse herself awhile with her music.

But, in every note, *his* lov'd idea mingled ; *his* exquisite taste in this delightful art—*his* enjoyment in hearing her sing—*his* fondness for this particular air—every sound was full of him.

Overpowered with affecting remembrances, she ceased, and leaned her head upon her hand, and gave herself up to illusions, and to tears.

While thus abstracted, she heard herself addressed by some one under her window.

It was a voice not easily forgotten, that pronounced her name,—“ Lady Ellen !”

With an instinctive smile, she flew to answer it.

“Are you disposed to be charitable, and indulge me with your company in a short ramble?” said Osmond; for it was indeed himself, looking too, more like himself than she had recently seen him.

She compelled herself to reply only by a slight bend, and the civil words, “with pleasure.”

He had not long to wait her approach. A gleam of pleasure passed across his features at the sight of her, and extending his hand, he took her's, drawing her arm gently within his own.

“This puts me in mind of past times, my pensive cousin,” said he, after they had walked together a short time in

silence. “ But I don’t know whether I can justly say my pensive cousin, now,” he continued ; “ for I think, Lady Ellen, I may congratulate you upon an increase of vivacity since last we met.”

Alas! the vivacity of which he spoke had been but the gaudy veil which virgin dignity had instinctively prompted her, when in his presence, to assume, in order to conceal the anguish, she half-despised herself for permitting to prey upon her heart.

She sighed deeply at his remark ; it was so much at variance with sad reality.

“ Is it not so, then ?” he said, looking down upon her with affectionate interest.

She scarcely dared to speak ; her voice, she knew, was hardly to be

trusted: but turning away her head, that he might not see the starting tears, she ventured to articulate, "I am as happy—as I deserve to be."

"Then you are blest, indeed!" he replied with energy.

They were both silent some minutes; and the pause was becoming painful, at least to her. Osmond was the first to break it: and in doing so, relieved her from all embarrassment, by recurring to the dispute which had that morning taken place between him and his father.

She could now express the deep interest she felt in his welfare and conduct, which she assured him could never in any instance be what he must wish it to be, if he encouraged a habit of disputing his father's desires, and living

at variance with his nearest and dearest friend.

“Your father is naturally proud of you, Osmond,” she said; “you are not to live for yourself only—you belong to a noble family, whose dignity and importance you have the power to increase; you cannot, without great injustice to your connexions, and yourself, indulge the caprice which seems to have taken possession of you; for what but caprice can have induced you to seclude yourself so long from your family, and now that you are recovered in health, and restored to their society, what can still influence you to adopt habits so unsocial, and so displeasing to my Lord?”

“But pardon me,” she continued, “the freedom of this remonstrance;” observing a gathering gloom upon his

expressive brow, that threatened her with the strange novelty of his displeasure at *her* reproofs, given as they always were with mildness, and hitherto received by him with the most pleasing gratitude.

“It was far from me the idea of intruding my counsels upon you,” she added, “but our long friendship—”

“My dear Ellen,” he exclaimed, suddenly taking her hand, and seeming to awake from a deep and painful reverie, “you totally mistake my silence—you mistake me indeed, wholly, if you think I can ever be otherwise than thankful, most thankful, to you, for your solicitude in my behalf, and for any counsels you may have the kindness to bestow upon one so unworthy of your notice.”

“ *I should not say that, Osmond,*” she replied with a smile of gentle reproach.

“ No, you would not, for you are all gentleness, and kindness—but I am—” He paused : a look of the deepest self-
abhorrence, seemed to say, he had failed in discovering the words that could testify how much he had fallen in his own esteem.

A prophetic horror thrilled through the veins of Lady Ellen as she remarked it. Scarcely could she subdue the impulse that prompted an inquiry into his meaning. But Osmond, resuming his address to her, continued with more composure :

“ I am sensible, Lady Ellen, that my conduct of late has appeared of rather a questionable nature. It is my mis-

fortune that I cannot explain it. If for any one I could undertake so painful a task, it would be to gratify your kind interest in my fate—my dearest, earliest friend;”—he ceased in extreme agitation.

“Only tell me this, Osmond,” she replied, deeply affected by his tenderness, “only tell me that no dishonour—”

“Oh Ellen, spare me—spare my broken heart,” he exclaimed with a degree of agony that it harrowed her very soul to witness.

Scarcely conscious what she did, she pressed her hand upon his arm, whilst the compassionate words, “my *dear* Osmond!” broke in the sweetest tones of tenderness from her lips. He fervently returned the fond pressure. “God bless you, best of women!” he said; “how little do I merit such

sympathy as yours! But forget me, Ellen: I would have every one forget me,—oh that I could but forget myself.”

“Alas, what words of despair are those, Osmond!” she replied; “what *can* be the dreadful cause that inspires them?”

“Oh it is nothing,” he replied; “I am not well in health, and my mind suffers; it is disturbed with fearful imaginations—I am not what I was.”

“Ah, that avowal, at least, is true!” thought Lady Ellen, “that melancholy assurance wants no confirmation.”

It appeared as if he could read her thoughts, and interpret her sighs; for, gazing upon her with a pensive smile, “but let me once more renew the past, dear Ellen,” he said; “let me be myself again, such as I was—charmed, soothed

into elysium, here—yes, in this very spot, one night last year—when you sung to me—Do you not remernber it?”

The shades of evening veiled those trickling tears, which would have eloquently told him how deeply the recollection of that night was imprinted on her memory.

She said nothing, but suffered him unresistingly to lead her to a seat, on which they placed themselves. “Now then, Ellen,” he said, “the charm of your voice in that evening hymn, I love so much to hear, it is all that is wanting to complete the devotion such a scene as this inspires.”

It was indeed an evening adapted to holy thoughts and pious feelings. The day had been intensely hot, not a cloud had obscured the splendour of the sun ;

that glorious luminary had now yielded his empire to the softer beams of the moon, which passing through the light and graceful foliage of the willow under which they sat, were then checquered in the stream that murmured at their feet.

Every thing was calm and still : nature seemed to pause in contemplation of her own loveliness. Once more Osmond so earnestly besought Lady Ellen to oblige him, that, scarcely knowing how to refuse any request of his, though with a voice more than once faltering, she complied ; giving to a sweet, simple melody, the following words of her own :

Departing day fades in the west,
 The busy world is still ;
 Be human passion hush'd to rest,
 Be tranquil, human will !

Father in Heav'n ! to Thee I bend,
 To Thee I lift my prayer ;
 Vouchsafe, Divine, Almighty Friend,
 Thy suppliant's voice to hear.

If lur'd by pleasure's specious wiles,
 By shadowy hopes or fears,—
 If earthly joy have waken'd smiles,
 Or earthly sorrow, tears :

If fall'n from Thee, and Thy commands,
 And fall'n she must appear ;
 Before Thee, Lord, Thy creature stands,
 A penitent sincere.

Oh, be her day's offence forgiv'n,
 Her night in slumber blest ;
 And pious trust in pard'ning Heaven,
 The pillow of her rest !

There was a piety in the sentiments of this little composition, that, breathed through the touching tones of her voice, matchless as it was in sweetness and

genuine feeling, acquired a pensive charm of the most affecting nature.

Unconsciously as he sat at her feet, Osmond reclined his head upon her hand, which she had suffered him to take. He was lost in reverie—his soul was filled with sublime aspirings. He could have wished at that moment to die—to have left for ever a world so vain—so transitory—so incapable of satisfying the immortal hopes that began to live within him. “Ellen—dear Ellen,” he said, “if it were but given me to breathe my last, in listening to such strains as yours, cheered by your comfortings!—”

She looked at him for a moment with inexpressible tenderness—but words were denied her.

It was to her a moment, rich indeed and precious, but evanescent as the hues of the rainbow, brightest amidst the darkest clouds of doubt and despair. "He surely loves me! oh, he surely loves me!" was the idea that darted across her mind; nature being ready with her usual fond delusion.

But then this mysterious secret that preyed upon his peace! Oh! if she could but penetrate it! What a load of anguish, in removing suspense, would it take away from her heart! In vain with gentle subtlety she sought to lead him imperceptibly back to the subject. She spoke of his brilliant prospects in life—his parents' hopes—she even ventured to hint at the pride she herself should take in his success.

He heard her in mournful silence ; replying only by deep sighs to her mild, but impressive address.

She knew not how to proceed ; for she felt that the charming ingenuousness which had hitherto distinguished him, and which had often led him to pour out every wish and thought to her, as to his chosen friend and counsellor, was now unaccountably exchanged for reserve and concealment.

Her desire to comfort and advise him, strong as it was, receded before his altered manner ; and she rose to return to the house, alleging the lateness of the hour.

He urged her to a longer stay ; but it was slightly ; very differently from the manner in which, on former occa-

sions, he had pressed for the pleasure of her society to the latest possible moment.

The depression which sudden and deep disappointment occasioned her, she vainly endeavoured to subdue.

“ But I can conceal it,” she thought.

“ I shall have time enough for the indulgence of tears and sorrow, when I am alone. It is to friendship I must confine my hopes—and it is something to be the friend of Osmond.”

Supported by this feeling, which naturally suggested itself to her tender mind, as worthiest to supply the void that must be left, when that other far more ardent sentiment was driven by duty and discretion from her bosom, she resumed her affectionate advice, specifying the particular instance in which it would afford her gratification to see him follow it.

“The Eustace family are to dine with us next week, Osmond,” she said, “and these gentlemen that Lord Arlington is so desirous of introducing you to. Now do not, as you did the other day, absent yourself from table, and disoblige your father by not choosing to appear. If it be only to please me,” she added, with a smile, “appear amongst them. Appear like the Osmond we used to know, full of sprightliness and mirth, and displaying, as occasion serves, those powers of conversation, which were never given you to waste, in a life of solitary abstraction, and indolent indifference.”

“Indolent indifference!” he repeated, proudly, as if the epithet jarred against every feeling of his soul.

“Nay, pardon me,” she replied, “so

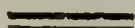
strong an expression ; I know well how little it ought, and, in point of fact, does characterize Osmond Lessingham. It is the consciousness how woefully you are wasting your noble gifts, at this important period of life, that makes me sigh,—and sigh the more, because I know amongst the malevolent, there will not be wanting many persons disposed to attribute your supineness in coming forward into notice, less to want of inclination, than want of ability to distinguish yourself.”

She had now touched upon two of the strongest passions of his impetuous nature—pride, and ambition ; his fine eyes flashed with indignation, and his noble form seemed to dilate to more than its usual stature.

“ Are these persons so disposed to stigmatize me ?” he said. “ Let them see me, then, unsubdued by affliction—free in heart, and firm in soul, and able to prosecute the energetic purposes of my nature. It is not here in *indolent indifference* that I would be found. In the field of battle—at the cannon’s mouth—amidst the listening senate— Oh Ellen ! I could do such things, if my path in life were but plain and open ! But I have choked it with thorns—I have blighted my views—I—but no matter—no matter—think of me no more—I will endeavour to be what you wish—now then, let us forget—forget—” and with the air of one distracted, he broke from her, leaving her at the steps of the door, but utterly incapable of

ascending them, standing still and motionless, watching him till he was out of sight, when a burst of tears afforded a wretched relief to her long-suppressed and painful emotions.

CHAP. IV.



AFTER this interview, so interesting, but so agonizing to Lady Ellen, she observed with pleasure that Osmond appeared to renew his former predilection for her society; regularly every evening that they were not engaged with company, and even when they were, and thus prevented from walking, attaching himself to her side, as if that were the only station in which he could enjoy any tolerable comfort.

The general tone of his conversation was now become composed and regular,

though still dejected ; but he never again reverted to the secret uneasiness, whatever it might be, that was devouring his happiness ; and strong as her inclination was to discover it, she had too much delicacy of feeling to revert merely for her own gratification to a theme which she knew to be distressing to him.

She took pains to persuade herself that she now perfectly understood him ; that she had calmly resigned all the bright and glowing expectations of happiness, with which she had anticipated their meeting, and that, denied the charm of more endearing intimacy, she could make to herself enjoyment in possessing his esteem—his friendship—“ *That I know he feels for me,*” she would often say,—“ yes, *that* he must feel for me,

—then I am happy—surely I ought to be happy.”—But tears!—they did not tell of joy—and in tears were ever closed these anxious soliloquies.

This conflict with her own heart, though believed by herself to be sustained in silence and in solitude, had not been wholly unobserved. The maternal affection of the Countess for this justly beloved, and amiable young woman, had enabled her long since to discover the tender secret she was so fondly cherishing. If the warmest wishes, the most sanguine hopes could have brought about her union with the object of her choice, Lady Arlington’s desire to see her best beloved son the husband of Lady Ellen Seymour, would have done much towards accomplishing it.

But too well did her Ladyship know the very different views her husband entertained for Osmond ; and though her heart was warm in the cause of her young friend, her peaceable temper and discreet judgment kept her entirely passive in promoting it, except, indeed, by that sort of connivance, which, without drawing upon her the notice of any party, satisfied her own very fervent desire, that no immediate obstacle might be thrown in the way of such an event.

On the day the Eustace family were expected at Arlington Park, Osmond had promised Lady Ellen to appear with the rest of his family, and with as much cheerfulness and animation as he could possibly assume ; “ for,” he added, with a sigh, “ it can only be the

assumption of gaiety I can now pretend to."

Of Lord Eustace and his lady, and his eldest son, very little need be said in the way of description. They were high in favour in a very high quarter, and enjoyed as much dignity and happiness as can well be enjoyed, when artifice and skill, rather than propriety and elevation of feeling, are the props on which importance is supported.

The rest of the leading people, Lord Arlington so much delighted in the idea of making acquainted with his son, were also of this description: Mr. Belford, Sir William Copeland, &c. &c., persons extremely useful, and, it may be, valuable, but not to the young, the natural, the enthusiastic,—not certainly

to Osmond, at the present period of his life ; we must be permitted, therefore, however senseless such a proceeding may be, to turn with him, with something of contemptuous indifference, from the inanity and polished sameness of these great people, and, as he was bound in honour by his promise to his cousin, to make himself agreeable to some, if not all of the party, accompany him to a seat by the side of a strikingly fashionable, and *almost* handsome woman—the Lady Jane Eustace.

“ And is it really Osmond Lessingham that I have once more the inexpressible delight of recognizing ? ” said she, raising her glass to her eye at his approach, and relinquishing it with a shake of her head ; “ you are a miserable looking creature, though, Osmond :

what have you been doing with yourself?"

"Absent so long from your Ladyship," he replied, "how is it possible I can look otherwise than miserable?"

"Well, come, that's pretty well, considering that you have, *by all accounts*, been rustivating in the shades of Woodhurst for the last twelvemonths; but there, I suppose, lives some other *Ladyship*, who just serves to keep you in the habit of saying civil things; nothing more—oh, nothing more!" she continued, observing the deep blush with which he listened to her raillery, and which he vainly endeavoured to laugh away.

Scarcely less vivid than the scarlet on his own cheeks, was the bright suffusion that spread itself over the coun-

tenance of Lady Ellen, who, occupying a part of the sofa on which Lady Jane was lounging, could not, if she had been so inclined, avoid to hear and observe what passed between her and Osmond.

It had not exactly been her intention, that with Lady Jane he should particularly ingratiate himself; she remembered enough of some anxious moments, which her Ladyship's decided disposition to coquetry, and Osmond's natural inclination to be pleased with animated female society, had, in former days, more than once occasioned her; but trusting to the alteration that had taken place in him since that period, she had looked forward to this meeting of his with her Ladyship without any of those agitating emotions, that she

would not absolutely call by the name of jealousy, but which, she dreaded to believe, could not justly be otherwise denominated, and which she had never been able to divest herself of, when in their presence.

It was with slight surprise, and rather more than slight sorrow, she remarked, how immediately the dejection of Osmond seemed to yield to the sprightly influence of Lady Jane,—that dejection which she had approached with fearful delicacy, and shielded with tender care from assailing with the most distant surmise ; that dejection her Ladyship rushed upon, with coarse ridicule ;—and no disgust—no recoil appeared to testify his displeasure—a blush, indeed—but that was no ungratifying testimony to her power over him—that might prove—

But she was prevented from proceeding in her painful soliloquy, by hearing herself abruptly addressed by her Ladyship, who, suddenly breaking off a sprightly dialogue she was holding with Osmond, turned to her: “and you, of course, will be of our party, Lady Ellen?” she said.

She was almost ashamed of acknowledging the abstraction which had prevented her from understanding to what she alluded:—and she inquired, “where?” in a tone of voice that indicated embarrassment.

“Where?” repeated Lady Jane; “why, is it possible that you have not heard the long and edifying account I have just been giving Mr. Lessingham of the history of my conversion? And it was partly to charm you that I re-

lated it, knowing you are one of the pious."

"You were doing me much more honour than I was aware of," she replied; "but if you will gratify me so far as to repeat the history, which must, I am sure, be an interesting one," and she smiled, "I will promise to be very attentive."

"Oh no—I never repeat any thing, not I; there are so many stupid things in life, that one is obliged to do over and over again, that one is thankful for any thing that need not be done more than once, and may then be forgotten."

"But so important a thing as your Ladyship's conversion," said Lady Ellen, with an arch look, "that surely must rank amongst the never-to-be-forgotten events of your life!"

“ Oh, it was a grand thing, to be sure; I think I shall make it into a case, and send it up to the Methodist Magazine people: it will shew well in print—*The History of the Conversion of the Lady Jane Eustace, only daughter of Earl Eustace, of Eustace House, in the county of Kent, who, in her nineteenth year had a call—I forget how they generally finish the story.*”

“ I am very much afraid you will forget, indeed,” said Osmond.

“ Well, at any rate, it was a good thing as long as it lasted,” she replied.

“ How long might that be, upon a liberal computation,” inquired Lady Ellen.

“ Why, all last Monday, I was as good as I possibly could be; and on

Sunday, the day I heard Mr. R——, I was a perfect saint. I sent a five pound note to the Infirmary as soon as ever I got home: and I meant to have gone to the charity-school, to hear the children read, but Harry Howard came to drive me out in his curricule, and so the thing was impossible.”

“ The immediate cause, then, of your Ladyship’s conversion, was the eloquence of Mr. R——, in preaching a charity-sermon at B——, I suppose ?” said Lady Ellen.

“ Yes, that was the saving of me,” she replied ; “ and they tell me he holds forth again next Sunday—He is an evangelical, tabernacle preacher, you know—not a regular, orthodox, church declaimer.”

“ That would have made the case too

tame and common-place for your Ladyship to patronize," said Osmond.

" Oh, that, you know, is nothing at all out of the common way—that gives one no kind of sensation. But a meeting-house—and a man preaching and praying without gown or surplice, and pouring forth his words without book, it is really very novel and engaging. I mean to go every Sunday as long as he stays; and it was my zeal to put every body else in the right way, that led me just now to propose making a party for next Sunday. I should like to give you a chance of being as good as I am myself;" and she turned to Osmond.

" You are infinitely obliging," he replied; " I cannot be otherwise than extremely happy in availing myself of the opportunity you hold out to me."

“ And you, Lady Ellen, will accompany us, I hope,” she said. “ It is quite in the style, I assure you, of you *penseroso* people.—Oh here is that abominable Mr. Belford, the most *larmoyant* personage in the world, coming, I imagine, to hand me to dinner, which seems to have been announced, by the ceremony that is taking place.”

“ Pardon me, Mr. Belford is not going to usurp my most agreeable duty,” said Osmond, taking her hand with a grace peculiarly his own ; a grace that imparted to the most trifling things he performed, a charm that penetrated to the heart—not, indeed of Lady Jane Eustace, but of that susceptible being who, lost in a chaos of bitter fancies, was scarcely conscious of outward scenes, till she also felt her hand taken, and,

“ Will you permit me, Lady Ellen, the honour ?” announced that the most *larmoyant* personage in the world was about to bestow that tediousness upon her, which Osmond had rescued the Lady Jane from being compelled to endure. But the good breeding and natural benevolence of Lady Ellen’s disposition: induced her at all times to hold the feelings of others in great respect; and though her eyes involuntarily wandered every now and then to that part of the table which was occupied by Osmond and Lady Jane, who, apparently, were very well pleased with each other’s society, she compelled herself to pay the most polite attention to the discourse Mr. Belford was addressing to her; though, in truth, it was little more than a repetition of the morning papers, il-

lustrated with comments, exceedingly wise and loyal in their sentiments.

To persons of dull sensibility, but little liable to be worked upon by small afflictions, it would be difficult to afford any just conception, either of the torture that poor Ellen endured, or the magnanimity with which she repelled it, during two hours, exceeding in her imagination, in point of duration, the whole month that had passed since Osmond's return.

She was at length relieved by a movement on the part of the ladies to retire. It was a short respite ; Lady Jane had scarcely time to yawn and snatch a short slumber, before the devoted Osmond appeared to restore her to her accustomed vivacity. " This, then," thought Lady Ellen, with a feeling of

natural and momentary irritation, “ this was what I was laying out for myself, when I almost implored Osmond to oblige his father, by appearing amongst his guests to-day ! Oh, blindness to the future ! Oh, frail humanity ! This painful evening, will it ever close ? ” and with difficulty she struggled with her tears.

Lady Jane now approached a table that stood near her, covered with new publications, prints, and various toys for grown-up children ; Osmond was still by her side.

She took up a splendid album : merely glancing at it, however, and throwing it down again, “ Oh, by the way, Osmond,” she said, “ you used to be rather *au fait* at hitting off a sonnet ; I believe I have got hold of all the

clever things that have been dropped of late : I want something now in the way of sentiment ; tender, *lachrymose*, such as you write for Lady Ellen here, or that other lady at Woodhurst : when you come to-morrow, you shall take back my album."

Of Osmond's reply, or of Lady Jane's rattle, Lady Ellen heard nothing. The words, "*that other lady at Woodhurst,*" alone vibrated upon her ears.

"Is it possible," she asked herself, with the doubt and disdain of an instant, "that he can really have dropped any hints to authorize this kind of rail-lery from her ? Is it possible she can be his confidante ?" No—no ; this was impossible, reason assured her.—Even now, though she had passed the most wretch-

ed day she had ever yet experienced in Osmond's presence—even now, though wounded to the soul by his neglect, she felt that she would ill prefer to exchange the tender, full communion of feeling and of mind, which had ever marked her intercourse with him, for the frivolous, unmeaning gallantry, that her *understanding* at least, told her had alone been visible in his behaviour to Lady Jane.

But the understanding and the heart are ever determined foes. No suggestion of the former could still the painful throbs of the latter ; so it did the office of a malicious enemy, and mocked the grief it could not heal.

The hour of release from misery came at last, and she was once more alone.
“ Yes—yes—I know that I am weak,

contemptible—despicable”—she said—as the company were breaking up, and Osmond gone off to hand Lady Jane to the carriage, she had seized the opportunity, and had escaped from the residue of the party, to the retirement of her chamber. “I know how undeserving of commiseration is this feebleness of mind; but I had so trusted in his love for me! I did so fondly believe it—but now I see it is all delusion! Yes, now I see that every hope is gone. Ah, weak that I am, I believed that I had long seen this, and was resigned: oh, wayward, inconsistent heart!” and she sobbed over her deep sense of humiliation, and want of self-respect, in suffering herself to be thus enslaved by a passion she knew to be so hopeless. Her generally feeble health made it not

an uncommon thing for her not to appear till late in the day ; and she had been schooling her feelings by the most serious reflection, and had succeeded in throwing over her pensive, but sweet and interesting features, a degree of placid resignation, that touched them with an expression almost divine, when, about an hour before dinner on the following day, she sauntered into the park, to try and revive her shattered nerves with the soft brēezes of a summer afternoon.

Her step instinctively bent towards the grotto ; a lovely spot, consecrated to her memory as the place where, retired from the heat of the mid-day sun, Osmond *last year* used to sit and read to her, whilst she pursued her work.

“ Last year ! blessed era in a mourn-

ful life !” she said : “ then, indeed, I was happy ;” she leaned her head dejectedly upon her hand, a few moments, yielding indulgence to the frailty of human feeling ; but it was only for a few moments.

“ This is not the place in which to strengthen good resolve,” she continued ; “ it is too full of fond associations—it is a place of danger—I must be gone ;” and she rose hastily to quit it : but ere she could pass the entrance, she found herself intercepted by Osmond.

“ They told me, my dear Ellen, that you were walking in the Park,” he said, “ and presentiment, I suppose, led me here to seek you.”

It was an impulse that would not be wholly restrained, which prompted her faint smile and cold reply of, “ Indeed !”

“ Yes, *indeed*,” he replied, taking her hand, and gently pressing it ; “ but your look and tone would imply, to any heart less assured than mine of your regard, a sort of doubt of the pleasure my anticipation of seeing you here, afforded me.”

It was so impossible for her to be really offended with Osmond, that had not the reflection of a moment served, as it generally did, in her meek and pious mind, to subdue irritation, the joy of hearing herself once more affectionately addressed by him, would have triumphed over every cold and repulsive feeling.

Still was it hers to prove the common destiny of human creatures ; and to have the usual mixture of bitter thrown into the golden cup of fleeting bliss.

A short interval of pleasure, in seeing him apparently in better spirits, and hearing him talk with cheerfulness, had been allowed her, when his mentioning the name of Lady Jane Eustace, in reviving many bitter ideas, and amongst the most prominent of them, one which very forcibly suggested that it was to her Ladyship's influence this happy change in him might be attributed, struck a damp upon her heart, and chilled the glowing happiness with which it was expanding.

“ What charming spirits Lady Jane has !” he observed ; “ she really is, altogether, very striking.”

She could not prevail upon herself to make any reply to this remark ; and Osmond proceeded :

“ I really must go on Sunday, and

hear this extraordinary person, who has wrought such a wonderful work upon her ; you will go also, I hope Ellen : it is quite in your way."

" I hope it is not in my way," she replied, rather gravely ; " that is, I mean," she added, observing him to look at her with a little astonishment, " I hope it is not in my way to go to any place of worship, as I would to a theatre, to stare at a novelty, and to be amused ; I am not so cold or so callous to the most important concern of my existence."

The fire of Osmond's temper did not permit him to pass over this remark without notice.

" Perhaps I am no more callous about that concern than you, Lady Ellen," he replied.

There was a haste and coldness in this sort of formal address from him, that wounded her so deeply, as to send the starting tear to her eyes.

But Osmond's irritable spirit was too much engaged in meditating upon the hurt his own pride had sustained by her remark, to observe the manner in which he had affected her; and she had time to soothe herself into composure before he condescended to address her again.

"I imagine, Lady Ellen," he said, still with an offended air, "that you took for literal flippancy of feeling, and for that want of understanding which must mark the scoffer at religion, the idle gaiety with which I listened to, and encouraged Lady Jane's conversation on this subject yesterday?"

"I can never take any conduct of

your's in that sense, Osmond ; I cannot make so great a mistake ; I know too well what nature has done for you in the way of intellect, and your excellent mother in pious instruction, to find any such excuses for your errors."

" True ! most true !" he replied ; " it is not here that my excuse is to be found ;" then, after a short interval of musing, breaking into softer feelings, " other poor creatures fall," he continued, " for they know not the way and the truth ; the goodness of God pardons *them*, for much has not been given. But I—oh, how have I deserved my Maker's noble gifts !—how have I abused the monitor he granted me, to quell my furious passions—to subdue my soul of fire, and guide it to its Father back again."

He ceased a moment or two; then taking her hand, and wringing it, as in the extreme of agitation, unconscious of what he did, “Ellen,” he said, “if you knew—if it were possible for you to conceive the misery that is eating up my soul, you would not reproach me, for seizing at any instant of forgetfulness, that the mirth or the folly of Lady Jane, or any one else, could offer me.”

It was not in human nature to listen to the dictates of dull formal propriety and maidenly reserve, which would have restrained the tenderness that led her to atone for the unintentional injury she had inflicted upon his suffering heart, by taking his hand, and clasping it fervently between her own. She forgot the delicacy of her situation as it respected him—she forgot every thing—

she saw only Osmond, that generous noble being, she had known from a boy, and as a boy had tenderly loved—bowed down with anguish—and how could she refrain from testifying compassion—how could she check the atoning words—“ My dear Osmond, do you think *I* reproach you ? Do you think *I* do not feel for your sorrow ? Do you think *I* would not rather alleviate it, if it were possible—and, if you could confide it to me—”

“ Could confide it to you !” he repeated, detaining her hand, and looking up at her, as he sat, with eyes beaming affection,—“ where is the being to whom, as the friend of my soul, I could sooner pour out my heart ? But this is a tale, my gentle Ellen, unfit for your ear ; urge me not to tell it, lest in

some moment of frenzy I utter it, and make myself hateful to you, and lose the only dear—dear being—whose kindness makes life supportable to me.”

She turned upon him the speaking smile of a moment—but words she could utter none—she felt herself surrounded with danger. The secret of her heart was every instant on the point of escaping, and she rose to seek the security of retreat.

“ So soon, Ellen, would you leave me?” he said, with a look of gentle reproach.

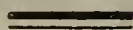
She hesitated—she half turned back—but Osmond prevented her: “ It is I that must go,” he said. “ It is I that should release you from witnessing these intemperate bursts of passion—oh how unfit—how unworthy to be ad-

dressed to such a mind as yours ! Sweet Ellen," he continued, "forgive me—forgive the impetuosity I have intruded upon you—believe in my grateful—my warmest regard."—He paused—and seemed to linger in painful irresolution ; at last, after casting over her sweet form and half-averted face, a glance, which the overflowing tenderness of his nature, tinged with an expression almost of passion, he caught her to him, and just touching her hand with his lips, he faintly again uttered, "forgive me !" and was gone—gone just at the moment to spare her from irretrievable confusion, at the torrent of pleasing, painful emotions, which, in a flood of tears, broke from her labouring bosom.

Vain now were all the good resolves of the morning !—Vain every effort

after forgetfulness ! The sound of his voice, as he uttered those precious words, “ Sweet Ellen ! ” the pressure of his hand !—of his lips !—she felt that years would not suffice to blot them from her memory !

CHAP. V.



ON the day to which Lady Jane had looked forward with such unbounded expectations of edification and delight, in again hearing Mr. R——, the preacher, who had so deeply affected her, Osmond was very much amused, and Lady Ellen in no degree surprised, by receiving, instead of her Ladyship, who had promised to call for them in her carriage, and convey them to B—, a note, to say, “that on the whole she had changed her mind, though still charmed to excess with Mr. R—, his tabernacle, his praying and preaching,

his wearing no surplice, and all the novel things belonging to him. But, in short, though an excellent thing, she believed she had had enough of it; recommending them, however, by all means, to put themselves in the way of being spiritually promoted," &c. &c.

A short debate followed; Lord Arlington, as a loyal man, and, consequently, so far a staunch supporter of the established church as consisted in shewing himself and his household there once a week, was far from approving his son's *committing* himself by being seen in a conventicle.

"Lady Jane," his Lordship remarked, "was a privileged person; but such a circumstance being observed of Osmond, might, possibly, trivial as it appeared, give a stamp to his destiny."

“ But as we have no intention of making him a clergyman,” said Lady Arlington with a smile, “ I think the hazard is not so tremendous.”

“ At any rate, if Lady Ellen chooses, we will incur it,” said Osmond, turning to her ; and on receiving her smiling affirmative, ringing to order the carriage.

Lord Arlington, pacified by being left with his Countess at the parish church, in their way, permitted them to go on without *much* reprimanding.

They took their seats, and the service began. Neither Osmond nor Lady Ellen had ever been in a meeting-house before ; and, in defiance of Lady Jane’s transports, they had prepared themselves for being rather more disgusted than pleased with the mode of worship they were to witness.

The different sentiments with which they returned home, were, no doubt, to be ascribed to the very superior manner in which they had the good fortune to see it performed. Had a vulgar or ordinary man, or, indeed, any other than an eloquent and superior one, officiated, they would have perceived the immense inferiority of extempore praying and preaching, where the mind is compelled to wander from its occupation, in choice of proper words in which to clothe its ideas, or else relapses into wearisome repetitions and vulgar familiarities of speech.

But be this as it may, they soon found their attention insensibly rivetted on what was going forward.

A hymn was read by one of the congregation in an audible, impressive

manner ; then, the whole congregation joined in singing at, as the same person repeated it, two lines of a verse at a time.

It excites a sublime emotion, to observe a numerous audience actuated by one sentiment, and that of so pure and exalted a nature.

Perhaps some of the attraction to Osmond in this part of the ceremony, might lie in the almost seraphic tones of Lady Ellen's voice. It was charming indeed but to hear her speak ; for she possessed, to an eminent degree, that " excellent thing in woman," a voice " soft and low."

In singing, particularly sacred music, it had something more than earthly in it. It rose with the pious strain, and the notes were so sweet and clear, such

an innocence, as it were, in their expression, that, even when passed away, they yet seemed to linger on the ear.

A chapter from the Bible having been read, an extempore prayer followed, and every one stood. Lady Ellen looked at Osmond; she was curious to discover whether he really was impressed as deeply as he appeared to be.

His eyes at first were fixed upon the minister, but soon sunk down, and were covered with his hand. She could perceive that his lips occasionally moved, and as the supplication became more fervent, a sensible emotion was observable in him. She could almost believe that he wept, when the minister, in praying for his congregation, implored for them grace to withstand “the allurements of sense, the fascination of worldly

affections, and all the destructive wiles of their spiritual enemy.”

Tears suffused her own eyes, at the bare idea, and recalling her wandering thoughts, she raised them in supplication for herself, and for him she loved.

The prayer ended, another hymn was sung ; and that concluded, the minister ascended the pulpit, and began his discourse.

The subject of it turned upon the inherent depravity of man ; and the danger and misery of an unrenewed state.

It seemed to be unconsciously that Osmond sighed, and murmured, “ how true !” as having dilated for some time, upon “ the vile and degraded nature of man from his birth,” the preacher thus proceeded to illustrate his position :

“ Who is there amongst us,” said he, “ that has not, on his personal experience, bewailed with deepest lamentations the frailty of his nature? Who is there that has not, at some period of his life, forgotten to repose upon that rock of ages, which alone is strong to support him, and resting on the pride of his heart, has trusted to his own reason to guide him—his own arm to save him, in his mortal conflict with the enemy of his soul? Who is there that has not, inflated with vanity, formed resolutions, revolved plans of conduct, laid schemes for his moral advancement, and, believing himself all-sufficient to himself, gone forth to combat with temptations too powerful for the weak resistance he has prepared for them? Have they not overwhelmed him in an

abyss of misfortunes; or, more dangerous still, have they not stolen upon his senses, in forms and colours of seductive beauty, enervating his reason, that feeble prop on which alone he rested? Has he not tottered—fallen—sunk—and then, perhaps, remembered his only friend—and, “Save Lord, or I perish!” has been the cry which the agonizing conviction of his helplessness has wrung from his repentant heart?”

It was not merely the suggestion of imagination, which now induced Lady Ellen to think that Osmond was powerfully affected by the words of the minister. He applied his handkerchief to his eyes; it seemed to be with difficulty that he sufficiently commanded his emotion to remain in the place; and

when, after having continued more than an hour, the sermon was at length concluded, it was easy to perceive, from the traces on his countenance, that *he*, at least, had not been amongst the inattentive part of the congregation.

That the deep and peculiar interest with which the preacher's discourse had inspired him, was connected in a great measure with the mysterious cause of all his dejection, Lady Ellen did not for an instant doubt. It had struck upon some particular chord within him, that vibrated to a degree of agony ; but apparently averse from acknowledging it, he endeavoured, as they were returning home, to conceal, under general criticisms upon the language and doctrines of the sermon, that deep sense of

its energetic truth, which had evidently come like the stroke of a dagger upon his heart.

“ I cannot *entirely* assent to this doctrine of Mr. R—’s, Ellen,” he said. “ I know that original sin is one of the fundamental articles of our faith ; yet it is difficult to allow it, at least to the extent which is sometimes insisted upon.”

“ It is difficult, I believe,” she replied, “ for the pride of man to make any concessions, which it may conceive to be derogatory to its own importance, Yet, surely, Osmond, it is only necessary for us to enter upon the task of self-examination, with the same severity of penetration we exert in scrutinizing the conduct and motives of others, to

learn very quickly how poor, how weak, how helpless we are."

"You then *are* a convert to the doctrine of the inherent depravity of man?" he replied.

"You it seems are not," said she, evading the question; "but how is it, then, that I have heard you so deeply bewailing past errors; reproaching yourself for—"

"Ah, Lady Ellen!" said he, interrupting her, "you must not cite me as an example for any purpose. If my judgment is to be formed on my own individual instance, I can assuredly find no difficulty in acknowledging my complete worthlessness."

"I know of no method of judging others," she replied, "especially in a

matter that concerns us all equally alike, but what must originate in considering its effect upon ourselves.”

“ Our consideration may commence upon our own case,” replied Osmond, “ but must not end there ; for nature, or education, or society, or connexions, or innumerable other circumstances, may have made an immense difference between the morality or goodness of me, and any other man. If we would judge correctly, we must extend our views to all our acquaintance ; we must consult the page of history—we must go back to distant ages, and search for examples of virtue. And are there none, Ellen, to controvert this sad, humiliating doctrine ? If human nature be this vile, degraded, abject thing, why did Socrates, why did Plato breathe their

lessons of virtue, and of wisdom? Where was the heroism of Lucretia—the dagger of Arria?—and why have our own annals consecrated the names of Hampden and of Sydney?”

Inspired by his theme, Osmond could willingly have proceeded in citing illustrious examples; but he suddenly recollected, that though he was talking with one of the best informed and most accomplished of women, still she was *but* a woman, and that it was not quite fair to overpower her with instances, of which she probably knew little beyond the names. But Lady Ellen knew more.

“Admitting,” she replied, “that philosophy has much to boast of in the names of Socrates, and his disciple Plato, and that the former was, as Cicero observes, “the first who brought

it down from heaven, introduced it into cities, and taught private persons how to reason on the conduct of life, on right and wrong, yet, is it not from his own declaration that we learn, that ‘he knew only one thing, which was, that he knew nothing.’ In this simple truism, we trace no conscious pride, no dignity of human nature.”

She paused a few moments, but Osmond listened for her to proceed, and she went on.

“ And for the heroism of Lucretia and of Arria, the patriotism of Algernon Sydney and of Hampden, it is not for me to depreciate their deeds. We read of heroes and of heroines ; we hear of, and we admire noble actions, though performed, perhaps, under an excite-

ment of mind that renders it difficult to say how far enthusiasm operated to produce them. But we know nothing of the thousands, who, in humble life, are exerting, less splendid, indeed, but not less painful heroism; the sacrifice of whose lives, by the dagger or on the scaffold, would be light, perhaps, in the scale, compared with the daily privations, and injuries, and self-denial, and self-exertion they are constantly called upon to endure. Such can be the heroes of Christianity alone, Osmond—and such they are—oh, never—never may I fall from my dependance upon it!—Without it—”

But she checked herself from being betrayed into saying all she felt—and sighing deeply, she was silent.

“ Alas! dear Ellen,” said Osmond,

“ it is pity your system (for I believe it to be the only true one) should have in it any thing repulsive.”

“ Repulsive, Osmond!—is it repulsive?” and she looked disconcerted; “ repulsive—what can you mean?”

How delicate is the desire which nature has implanted in the heart of woman, of rendering herself, and every thing connected with her, attractive to the other sex!

The idea of being repulsive was insupportable to her, and she applied herself, by all the rhetoric in her power, to win him over to adopt her way of thinking.—“ I know how it is,” said she, giving him a melancholy smile: “ Christianity is too unbending, too plain, too much matter of fact, to assimilate with the airy, glowing visions in which

your imagination has been too prone to indulge. You would have its morality arrayed in better taste, you would make it more poetical, and then you could devote yourself to it heart and soul.

“ But permit me, Osmond,” she continued, with a blush that bespoke her earnestness to convince him, and her dread that he should penetrate the source of that earnestness, “ permit me to request you will consider this one point, that Christianity, being intended as a universal means of salvation, should be constructed so as to apply itself to the comprehension of all; and how could this be accomplished, if, instead of being addressed to the understanding, it appealed only to the fancy and imagination? How would the tasteless and the vulgar, who constitute by far the

greater part of human creatures, be the better for a system of morals which to them would be perfectly unintelligible? Do but consider this, and you will find new cause to adore and reverence the wisdom of its Divine Founder. To whom does he address himself? ‘Come,’ says he, ‘come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ The suffering and the sorrowful, the poor and the simple, and those who have none to help them, are here included with the wise and the learned, and the rulers of the earth.”

She ceased, but Osmond could have wished that she had continued to speak; for a preceptress so mild, so calculated to work a good work upon a penitent heart, never was an erring man, he thought, so blessed with.

It was impossible for his fervent nature not to mingle a degree of passion with every sentiment he experienced. He took her hand, and looking at her with a smile, ere he raised it to his lips, "how blest will that man be, Ellen," he said, "who claims with this fair hand, a *right* to your counsel and affection."

She turned away her face, he fancied in displeasure. "Oh, pardon me, Ellen," he said, "the freedom of addressing you in this manner. These liberties are too unwarrantable."

She had now sufficiently composed herself to speak ; and, turning to him with a cheerful countenance, "We are too near and dear to each other—" she said, and then she paused.

He happily finished the sentence for

her, and saved her the difficulty of adding—"to take offence lightly."

"True, we are so, my dearest cousin," he continued; "believe me, Lady Ellen—but you will readily believe it, the fondest brother cannot more tenderly love his sister than I do you." He was evidently affected in making the acknowledgment. But what was his emotion, compared with the pang that this declaration darted through the bosom of Lady Ellen! "*The fondest brother's love!*—no more! Then all is over, indeed! was the conviction it flashed upon her mind.

CHAP. VI.



THIS conviction remained in full force, and reason did its part in suggesting it strongly to her consideration, till, as is usual in these cases, the next instance of affection or simple kindness in the object beloved, restored imagination to her office ; poor reason was dethroned, and fond fancy reinstated in her dominion. In this alternation of feeling, three months passed away ; at the end of that time, hope began greatly to predominate in the bosom of Lady Ellen : for Osmond's conduct to her became more uniform, more like what it had

been the preceding year ; and, ceasing gradually to revert to his unhappiness, he had by this time seemed almost to have forgotten it. She, on her part, was willing enough to let it sink into oblivion, and to lull herself into a belief that it was a mere passing source of uneasiness, magnified by his warm imagination into an importance, which time had reduced to its real insignificance.

About this time a circumstance occurred, which, in spite of the severe lecturing she administered to her feelings on the occasion, she could not contemplate without some degree of complacency. It was the removal of a rival, not indeed in Osmond's love, for she could not in her most anxious moments do his judgment and taste the injustice of supposing that he really loved the Lady Jane

Eustace, but in his ambition, which she knew exercised a sufficiently potent sway over him to make him not wholly inattentive to his father's wishes of connecting himself highly in marriage.

She could not, at all times, feel secure that this passion would not effectuate the work of a more engaging one, and lead him to sacrifice at its shrine.

Many more improbable things, she was well aware, had happened in the history of wedlock, than the union of Osmond Lessingham with Lady Jane Eustace, though he professed to think her oftentimes affected and frivolous, and *seemed*, in comparison, to estimate his cousin beyond all price. However, all debatings, all painful reveries of an hour long, ending just where they began, were, as far as related to the Lady

Jane, irrevocably concluded, by her elopement, one morning, to Gretna Green with "Harry Howard," as she always designated a colonel in the guards, whom nobody in the world but her father and mother suspected her of being inclined to favour.

They had somewhat injudiciously fanned into a flame, by a storm of angry reproaches and flat denials to the proposals of the Colonel, what might otherwise have been but a dying spark of preference in the fancy of Lady Jane.

Feeling, like other young ladies of nineteen, when threatened with being deprived of their first lover, that she was a victim to unheard of barbarity, she was not an unwilling listener to the arguments of the Colonel, which placed before her in a strong point of

view the propriety of their taking the matter into their own hands, and obviating any further discussion by a clandestine marriage.

The usual consternation ensued upon their flight ; the usual resentment in the father—and lamentation in the mother—and vows of vengeance in the brother—all of which, as usual, in proper time subsided ; and as usual, also, the Lady Jane and her husband were, in due season, received back with that sullen kind of forgiveness, which people accord to faults that cannot be retrieved.

Merits were found out in the Colonel that he had never been suspected of possessing before ; and as much solid comfort derived from the connexion, as could arise from an union with a splen-

did suit of regimentals and three thousand a-year.

This event being now of more than a fortnight's occurrence, was pretty well forgotten in the neighbourhood; and Lady Ellen, quite established in the same unrestrained and pleasing intercourse with Osmond, which had formerly been but too charming to her, was beginning to believe that she was almost *too* happy, when a very unforeseen interruption to her felicity presented itself in the arrival of a visitor at Arlington Park, whom she had often heard Osmond mention in the highest terms of affectionate respect.

It was a gentleman of the name of Greville, a Fellow of All Souls, at Oxford; a person whose natural character it would be difficult to define, so much

had education and skilful management rendered it artificial. He had accidentally been introduced to Osmond's acquaintance during the residence of the latter at Christ Church ; and, attracted by the talents and accomplishments of the young man, had, though many years his senior, entered into habits of great intimacy and friendship with him.

Mr. Greville was a man of good family and good fortune ; great good sense and irreproachable conduct ; highly pleasing manners, and a most accomplished and cultivated mind.

Valuable as these recommendations were, it was not altogether to them alone, that he was indebted for the enthusiastic admiration with which he had inspired Osmond.

It may have been gathered from the conversation which passed between the latter and Lady Ellen Seymour, on leaving the meeting-house of Mr. R—, that Osmond, like most young men of his age, entertained high notions of the inherent dignity of his nature ; and a greater disposition to venerate the doctrines of philosophy, than the Christian education of Lady Ellen would admit of her entirely approving.

This, his propensity, had been much encouraged whilst he was in the habit of intercourse with Mr. Greville.

It must be confessed, that, amongst the *hidden* characteristics of Mr. Greville, could not be numbered a disposition to patronize and approve of every body connected with nobility. It was not at all a concealed trait in the portraiture

of his mind : on the contrary, it was a very leading feature. No one was better read in human nature than he was ; no one was more aware that if a man wishes to succeed in society, and to arrive at distinction and importance, he must pay that vigilant, unceasing attention to his own interest, which places a guard upon all the avenues that lead to it ; which makes him in every action suppose that the eyes of the world are upon him ; and which prompts him to surround himself with connexions and acquaintance, whose most insignificant attentions may *tell* with the vulgar ; that great mass, who have no capability of judging but by means of their senses ; and who, after their gross capacity, always estimate a man by the outward consideration he receives. It was prin-

cipally, therefore, to this, his opinion, that Osmond, in the first instance, was indebted for the very great and flattering attentions he received from him.

But, besides the sagacity which led him to value, at his full price, a young man highly connected, Mr. Greville had sufficient tact and taste to discover and appreciate, those more noble claims to his notice, which Osmond's talents and genius exhibited. The interest he had testified for him in various kind offices, and in recommending books to his perusal, not such merely as were connected with his course of study, but as of a more light and elegant turn, were adapted to polish his mind, and amuse his leisure hours, had inspired very warm and grateful sentiments for him on Osmond's side. These were increased

in fervour, by observing with what affectionate and considerate mildness, Mr. Greville reasoned with him upon a slight imprudence of conduct, of which he had once or twice been guilty.

As it was from this conversation that his high admiration of his friend was to be dated, it may not be irrelevant to repeat a part of it.

Osmond, in a repentant state of mind for his fault, was one evening deeply engaged in reading a book, which he had a short time before borrowed of Mr. Greville. It was Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Whilst he was absorbed in the study of it, Mr. Greville entered his room; and after a little conversation, inquired of him what he was reading?

“ The book of Adam Smith's, that

I borrowed of you," replied Osmond.

"It is a beautiful work," he observed.

"Beautiful, indeed," replied Osmond; "surely this is a book calculated to make one better."

"If any book can accomplish so desirable an end," replied Mr. Greville, "I believe that to be one of them. But at your age, Osmond, books, I fear, are but formal dulness."

"No! excuse me," he replied, "that is not the case; they are very often charming whilst they occupy me, as this is, for instance; but their influence, I admit, is lamentably short-lived."

"But the time is at hand," said Mr. Greville, with earnestness, "in which their influence must not be thus transient. You are now approaching that

period of life, which will probably determine the whole of your future destiny. Your own observation and experience cannot, of course, for many years supply you with much practical wisdom ; it is incumbent upon you, therefore, to store your mind with such useful rules of conduct, as the wisdom of others supplies you with. The book you are now perusing is inestimable for this purpose. Keep it as your own ; and do not turn to it with mere admiration of its fine writing, and acute reasoning, but consult it as a counsellor and a friend."

He interrupted Osmond's thanks by proceeding with increased seriousness.

"I cannot say that I have not been very much grieved by your late imprudence ; not that I expected infallibility

from a young man of your age : but degrading errors bespeak bad taste, as well as bad morals, and I had somehow piqued myself upon your delicacy of mind, Osmond."

Osmond coloured violently, but said nothing ; and Mr. Greville continued.

" I cannot express to you the sorrow it would occasion me if you were to take a wrong course in life. Your talents—your real goodness of heart—"

" I am sure that I can never voluntarily do any thing to give you pain," said Osmond, impatient to express the gratitude he felt for this kindness ; " I have been led astray, it is true, but from this instant I solemnly declare—"

" Make no solemn declarations," said Mr. Greville, interrupting him. " Resolutions that are suddenly and violently

adopted, are seldom firmly kept. It is not easy to establish in the mind a steady principle of resistance to temptation ; it must be a work of habit and of time."

" But there is great satisfaction, certainly," he continued, with a smile, in saying, '*I will not.*' The task appears half accomplished when the resolve is made, because the temptations which are to exercise it are not at hand."

" But it is surely by arming ourselves with resolution," said Osmond, " that we can alone combat successfully with the temptations that surround us?"

" Undoubtedly," he replied. " But it must be resolution which has grown into principle; not the momentary result of good impulses which sometimes visit the worst of men."

Their conversation continued for some time. It is not necessary further to detail it ; we shall merely remark, that the arguments Mr. Greville made use of, were such as to elevate Osmond's mind with a sense of its own dignity and capability of correct conduct ; and to inspire him with an ambition of deserving the approbation of the good.

Osmond could perceive that his doctrines were formed upon those of Adam Smith, which did, in fact, contain a great part of his system of morality ; and he could not but highly venerate the source from which he derived principles, which prompted a uniformity of such conduct, as certainly rendered Mr. Greville respected even by his enemies, and enthusiastically beloved by his friends.

Osmond retired to bed, with his head full of exalted ideas. He knew not which he revered most, the manual of Adam Smith, which he laid under his pillow, or Mr. Greville, who stood forth a living illustration of its precepts.

From this time their connexion assumed a character of the most intimate friendship. Mr. Greville, availing himself of every occasion of testifying his regard, by offering Osmond a multitude of small services and attentions ; contriving, at the same time, it must be acknowledged, though very delicately, and skilfully, to let him feel the full value of his kindness, by insinuating the happiness he felt in being useful to him.

Osmond's gratitude, and desire of continuing, after leaving the university,

the connexion between them, had induced him to make many entreaties that Mr. Greville would visit him at his father's house.

Various circumstances prevented his accepting these invitations whilst the fervour of them lasted; but, with the prudence of his nature, he had judged it highly desirable to keep his young friend in sight through life, though at present their acquaintance should be kept up by correspondence only.

That method of sustaining it, he very soon found, was not absolutely to be depended upon. Osmond, during his mysterious *sejour* at Woodhurst, having little time or inclination to devote to his pen, had been but languid and brief in his epistles; not indeed, as Mr. Greville discerned, from inconstancy towards

himself, but from his being preoccupied, as it was natural to suppose he would be, at his age, with some new pursuit.

As Mr. Greville, however, who was not a person to be easily diverted from his purposes, whatever they might be, had *once* decided upon the advisableness of continuing his connexion with Osmond, he waited only for the opportunity the long vacation afforded him of writing, to say he should have pleasure in availing himself of his kind and repeated invitations to visit him; and would, if convenient to receive him, be at Arlington Park on such a day.

CHAP. IX.



MR. GREVILLE had been their visitor about a week, extremely agreeable to every member of the Arlington family, except indeed, we believe we must say, Lady Ellen Seymour; who, in discovering that his presence engrossed the greater part of Osmond's time, could scarcely be expected to feel much delight in the prospect of his continuing their guest.

At times, when she strove to be candid and liberal, and triumph over feelings that she condemned as little

and unworthy of her, she believed that what with dinners, and parties of every description, which, in compliment to his friend, Osmond had caused to be instituted on his arrival, it was not so much to be wondered at that he had never once, since Mr. Greville's arrival, sought one uninterrupted interview with her. But the jealous eye of love discerned, or *imagined* it discerned (which is the same thing, for when under the influence of attachment, imagination may be considered as the only acting intellectual power) that Osmond was very well satisfied to have an excuse for a change of behaviour.

Altogether she felt dissatisfied and unhappy ; dissatisfied, because her high sense of rectitude was at this moment at war with all her feelings, and un-

happy because she knew not how to make the sacrifice it imperiously called upon her to make.

“ I *ought* to return home,” she frequently said to herself ; “ the part I am acting, is not proper—it is not worthy of me—I am yielding to a sentiment that subjugates me to the meanest passions—unjustifiable dislike—paltry jealousy—I will—yes—I think I will return home—”

She was thus painfully soliloquizing one morning in the library, when her meditations were interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Greville and Osmond, both of them apparently equipped for a ride.

Osmond came to bring her a new poem ; observing, at the same time, that “ he believed she would not read it,

upon his testimony ; as he knew she held poor Amyntor in devout abhorrence, as all good Christians were bound to do ; “ so I have brought my friend Mr. Greville to plead his cause,” he continued ; “ and I do beg, my pensive cousin, that you will not permit any rigid notions of your own, or any other person, to rob you of the great gratification you will derive from the perusal of this charming poem.”

“ Osmond has brought me to make a speech to your Ladyship,” said Mr. Greville ; “ but having taken that office upon himself, I have only to second the motion of my honourable friend.”

“ I think, Lady Ellen,” he continued, “ when you have read this introductory stanza,” and he repeated it with much

feeling and expression, “ you will scarcely need any persuasion to tempt you to proceed.”

“ I should be sorry to stand so low, as I feel I must do, in Mr. Greville’s opinion,” she replied, “ were I to say how much persuasion is requisite to induce me to look at any of this author’s works.”

Mr. Greville only replied by a polite bow, and an assurance that “ it was impossible that a difference of sentiment, upon a mere point of taste, could affect his very high opinion of Lady Ellen Seymour.”

But Osmond rather hastily took up a volume that lay upon the table, the work of a very religious author ; “ and is there to be *no* respite from these austere and gloomy studies ? ” he said ;—

“ I have no patience with these ascetics !” he continued, rather too vehemently—at least to Mr. Greville’s judgment, who, with an insurmountable horror to any thing of a *scene*, interrupted what further he was going to say, by reminding him that Lord Arlington, who was to accompany them in their ride, would be waiting for them.

“ I will follow you immediately,” said Osmond, turning back, just as they had reached the door. Addressing Lady Ellen with more mildness, he begged to apologize for his *brusque* remark upon *her* favourite author ; “ but it was excited, my dear Ellen, by your contempt for mine. We are all apt to be bigotted in our love for the works that afford us most pleasure, and surely when you consider the beauty,

the majesty, the sublimity of many parts of Amyntor's works, you are only censuring your own taste in saying that you require persuasion to be induced to look at them."

"The splendour of this author's genius," she replied, "can never be dimmed by *my* criticisms. I can only lament, with all who wish well to mankind, that it should be so dreadfully misapplied. That a man should voluntarily devote his talents to the service of sin; that with capacity and taste to discover and admire the good and the beautiful, he should only, or chiefly, appropriate his powers to the embellishment of all that is hateful and wicked, must, surely be as revolting to one's understanding as one's heart."

Osmond seemed to consider her remarks with attention, and she proceeded with increasing fervour :

“ I never, *never*, can consider that man worthy of respect or admiration who seeks to rob me of my best and dearest hopes, by ridiculing all that I venerate and esteem ; and who represents my fellow creatures to me as little better than the brute creation when alive, and destined to annihilation when dead.”

“ I respect your piety, Ellen,” he replied, “ as I do every trait in your character ; but these doctrines, when pushed to excess, are the destruction of sentiment—the ruin of imagination—the scourge of taste—I cannot bear that they should operate to your disadvan-

tage, and induce you to express opinions liable to lower you as a person of taste in the estimation of others. I cannot bear that so elegant a man as Mr. Greville should have any doubts as to your merits upon this point."

"Mr. Greville's opinion may be a law to you, Osmond," she rather gravely replied, "but it cannot be so to me."

"I am sorry for it, Lady Ellen; as my particular friend, I was in hopes you would have valued him a little more."

"I know little or nothing of him, Osmond; you cannot, therefore, in justice be displeased that, as yet, I have not testified any very warm admiration of merits, to which I must be so great a stranger."

"And you are likely to continue so, I fear," he replied; "you do not draw

him out by the slightest advance on your side ; you are cold, and distant with him. In short, Ellen, you do not like him, and that is the truth of the case."

" I am not aware of entertaining any prejudice against Mr. Greville," she replied, colouring deeply as she spoke ; " he appears to me a very gentlemanly man, and of a very accomplished mind."

" He appears to me," said Osmond, warmly, " as one of the most enviable of human beings."

" That is saying a great deal in his favour ;" and she smiled.

" His self-command, his kindness, his clear, well-judging mind, his respectable character, his general happiness—all this is enviable, I think."

She was silent.

“ Do you not think so, Ellen ?”

“ It is all very good as far as it goes, certainly.”

“ And a more strictly moral man cannot exist,” continued Osmond.

“ A *Christian* moralist, is he ?”

Osmond paused a little before he replied,

“ He attends divine service every Sunday.”

“ Is it satire, or eulogy that you are pronouncing ?” she inquired with an arch smile.

“ Nay, I meant to propose it as an exhibition of his faith,” he replied.

“ Well, I would not upon any account depreciate the worth of your particular friend, Osmond ; but let me counsel you not to propose him to your-

self as a model. His system of morals will never do for you."

"If it does for him—"

"Ah! but what does it do for him?"

"It makes him respectable, and virtuous, and happy."

"Happy, Osmond! how can you venture to say that? How can you imagine that any morality which has not the truths of revealed religion for its basis, should conduct to any thing like happiness or peace?"

"You can only surmise, Ellen, that Mr. Greville is not a christian; for I am sure he is much too cautious a man to express any thing like an opinion on the subject. He pays strict attention to all the forms of religion, and I, that have known him so much longer than you have, should feel it difficult to decide in

my own opinion upon what really were his tenets."

" But I, a simple, unlearned woman, who have seen and known Mr. Greville but a very short time, I have no hesitation, Osmond, in saying that his morality, whatever it may be, is not drawn from the Book of Life. If it were, would there be that carelessness of conversation which the world may call graceful and pleasing, but which to me clearly indicates an indifference to sacred things! Would there be, as Osmond I remember there was, when Lord Arlington the other day was speaking of some one who had died suddenly, that shudder, and the expression ' Ah, that dying !'—do you recollect it ?"

Osmond did remember it ; and he could not but smile, and be struck with

the quickness which had immediately discovered in this little trait, the volume of information it, in fact, did disclose relative to his friend.

Osmond had remarked that no one ever testified more repugnance to growing old and dying, than Mr. Greville always did ; though quite involuntarily, and by some such unconscious thinking aloud, as Lady Ellen's penetration had remarked.

“ And have you not observed,” said she, “ how he seems to keep at bay, all the encroaching reflections of advancing life? what value he attaches to connexions and society, and how seriously he speaks of the importance and necessity of being surrounded with them ?”

“ But this is natural for a solitary man, who is now no longer young, Ellen ; and surely it is very innocent !”

“ It is innocent, and natural, and very laudable to make and to keep as many friends as we can,” she replied ; “ particularly in the decline of life, when we must lean in a great measure upon the kindness of others for comfort and enjoyment. But I apprehend, that the internal happiness of a really good Christian would not depend upon any outward circumstances. Far from declining with declining years, it would expand as it approached nearer and nearer to death, its final consummation. From the contemplation of that last hour, there is no shudder—no recoil : for He who cannot deceive, has promised to be with His followers even unto the end. And to that end they look with humble hope, and holy joy.

She paused : her soft eyes were raised to Heaven, looking the truth she felt.

“ But,” after a few moment’s silence, “ let us say no more of Mr. Greville,” said she ; “ he is your friend, Osmond, and you are bound to be grateful and affectionate to him. But that does not imply that you should erect him into a standard of right and wrong.”

“ You are my standard of all that is good, dearest Ellen,” replied Osmond, much affected by the warmth of her enthusiasm ; “ would that you were my sister, and always with me ; would that”— At this moment a servant entered to summon him to his ride with his father and Mr. Greville, and somewhat precipitately he withdrew.

“ Would that you were my sister !” she mentally repeated. “ Sister ! how often have I heard that word ! What pains does he take to imprint upon my mind a right idea of his attachment !”

She mused upon this idea some time : at last she brought herself to a miserable conclusion.

“ He surely sees my weakness !” she thought ; and he wishes to obviate the pangs of my disappointment. “ Oh, Osmond ! how despicable must I seem to you !” and she covered her burning face with both her hands ; abased, humiliated to a degree almost of anguish.

She had long remained in this state of abstraction, when she was startled by feeling a gentle pressure upon her shoulder. She hastily turned round. It was Lady Arlington, who, from the door of the conservatory which was open, had entered the apartment unperceived by her, and had now been some minutes interested in remarking her

deep, and, as her frequent sighs indicated, somewhat painful reverie.

“ And what can be the important subject that so wholly absorbs you, my fair Ellen ?” said she, taking her hand. Lady Ellen faintly smiled.

“ Come, tell me,” said the Countess, playfully, but with more of tenderness than Ellen dared to encourage. She seemed to have, but for the first time, caught a glimpse of the real state of Osmond’s feelings, and of the part she ought immediately to take. Her mind was all a chaos ; and nothing was distinctly present to her, but a conviction that she must struggle, and suffer, and resign, for ever the dear and cherished emotions that had so long been the charm of her existence. To indulge

the affection of her friend which she felt an instinctive assurance would draw from her in a moment an acknowledgment of the passion she was called upon to subdue, was an inclination which her strong sense enabled her instantly to repel; and with an effort, which nothing but the strength that a vigorous mind affords upon a sudden emergency, could have suggested, she rose and replied to Lady Arlington's importunity by saying, "She had been thinking of her long absence from home, and her friends, and poor pensioners; and unwilling as she was, and always must be, to leave Arlington Park, as the sacrifice must some time or other be made, she would not any longer postpone it."

"To-morrow, therefore, dear Lady Arlington," she continued, "I shall

with your permission, return to Richmond."

"To-morrow! you cannot surely be in earnest?" and her Ladyship spoke in a tone of gentle reproach.

"I believe it will be better." It was with difficulty she brought out the last few words.

"My dear Ellen—what is the meaning of this?"—The Countess was going to add; but the burst of tears that followed her pressing the hand of her young friend, made all intelligible enough. "Nay, nay, Ellen," said she, endeavouring to detain her, but finding it in vain, yielding to her repeated intreaties that she would suffer her to retire.

"But you will not go to-morrow, love—not to-morrow?"

“ Yes, yes ; to-morrow !” she repeated, with quickness, “ by the earliest dawn.”

“ As you please, then,” said Lady Arlington, with a sigh. Lady Ellen turned round just as she was leaving the room, and approaching her with hasty steps, she took her hand, and almost wringing it under the intenseness of her feelings, “ Oh, Lady Arlington !” she said, “ dear, dear friend—do not be displeased with me ; do not make a party with me against myself ; if you knew, if you could conceive what I have to struggle with in framing this determination ! do not endeavour to unsettle it. My heart is with you, but I dare not yield to its persuasions.”

And again she was forcibly withdraw-

ing from the detaining hand that would have impeded her departure.

“ Only tell me this, my love,” said Lady Arlington, with the deepest agitation imprinted on every feature; “ has Osmond been ungenerous—has he—”

“ Oh no,—no,—” exclaimed Lady Ellen, impatient to justify the idol of her heart from the breath of suspicion. “ He is all that is noble—all that is good—think no harm of him—nor of me—when this weakness is past—for it is nothing—no indeed, it is nothing,” and she tried to smile—but it was in vain—Lady Arlington’s look of tender interest penetrated to her soul—and nothing could restrain the impulse that prompted her to hide the gushing tears that followed this fruitless smile, by throwing herself upon the bosom of her

friend, and there sobbing as if her heart would break.

“ Oh, my mother—my more than mother—you must not—indeed you must not—” she incessantly repeated, as Lady Arlington, herself affected almost beyond the power of speaking, could only testify her sympathy by fondly pressing her to her bosom—and trying to soothe her by dropping expressions that told how much her own hopes and wishes assimilated with those of her young friend.

“ You will one day be united, love—Osmond cannot be insensible to your merits—he is not—I am sure he is not—” were words too precious to be heard with indifference.

But the hour of stern, unrelenting duty was come—and *once* aware that she was summoned by her understand-

ing to follow its dictates, there existed not a being in the world more immovable, more firm in purpose than Lady Ellen Seymour.

Once more she released herself from the embrace of the Countess.

“ You have seen the weakness of my nature, Lady Arlington,” she said,—“ it is fit now, that you should witness its strength. I love Osmond—how truly—how fervently—is known only to God and my own heart. But he loves not me—”

“ I am not quite convinced—” Lady Arlington was beginning to say—but Lady Ellen proceeded with hurried accents, as if she dreaded the influence her words might obtain over her.

“ *I am*—that must suffice. Pardon me dearest—best of friends, this seem-

ing abruptness—too long have I yielded to the delusion of treacherous feeling—charming indeed!—but visionary!—it is time for me to shake off these vain imaginations. Henceforth I must look only upon reality—upon stubborn, uncourteous, but wholesome truth—I must return home, and there surround myself with occupation, with duties to fulfil, and I shall be happy ; yes, Lady Arlington, I shall yet be happy—if not here—” She was compelled to pause—but ever as she wiped away her tears, she soothed the real distress of Lady Arlington, by repeating, “ I shall yet be happy—do not grieve for me—I know that I shall be happy.”

“ God grant that you may—my own Ellen ! said the Countess, pressing her to her bosom as she spoke. “ I trust

and believe that you will—and perhaps not the less so, eventually, though our hopes should be frustrated in the present instance. Osmond is a dangerous being, and heaven only knows how far a union with him would be likely to promote a woman's happiness.”

Lady Ellen sighed—at *present*, it was impossible for her to suppose a care—an anxious thought—any thing but bliss for the being who was destined to be the wife of Osmond Lessingham. But though incapable of assenting to the remark of Lady Arlington, she spoke but the real sentiments of her pious heart, when she replied, “it is one of the most soothing doctrines of the creed by which I strive to regulate my conduct, that it inspires a conviction of my fate being in the hands of Providence.

I know that I have no power over any event of my life : I resign them therefore to Him, who, I doubt not, will order them for my ultimate benefit. It is not indeed, without tears and prayers that I can bring myself to this state of submission—for I am human—and the frail wishes—the futile projects of ignorant mortality have too often, and too long seduced me. But it is to be done—This subjugation of passion—of stubborn will—of fanciful imagination is to be accomplished—and it shall be—But I spend myself in words, when all with me must now be action. My dear friend—let us speak of him no more—do not endeavour to detain me here To-morrow I must leave you—and when we meet again, be assured of seeing me cheerful—” and happy—she intended to

have added; but she had supported herself to the utmost verge of heroism, and nature demanded the indulgence of some human feeling. She hurried from the room—and in her own apartment we must for a while leave her—not weak and irresolute—not inconsistent, or abandoning her sustaining principles—but struggling, and subduing, and aiming at a conquest, compared with which, as the poet of Christianity so justly remarks,—

“The laurels that a Cæsar reaps are weeds.”

CHAP. VIII.

LADY ARLINGTON was not entirely satisfied with the conduct of her son, although Lady Ellen had so unhesitatingly exculpated him from blame.

Affected by the scene which had just passed between them, and still sanguine in her opinion (because her wishes pointed the same way) that Osmond really was attached to Lady Ellen, she determined to make, if she could not find an opportunity, of talking with him on the subject.

One presented itself rather sooner than she expected, or indeed desired ; as she

would have preferred talking with him at a time when her feelings were more composed, than her recent conversation with her young friend had left them.

She had but just been taking a few turns in the grounds immediately near the house, deeply meditating upon what would be the issue of the subject that interested her, when Osmond returned from his ride, himself approached her, looking so happy, so handsome, such a combination of all that was graceful and pleasing, that the mother's pride, in looking upon him, for a moment, absorbed every other feeling ; and it became impossible for her to do otherwise than smile upon him as he approached, and take the arm he offered her—as he joined her in her walk.—

“ But where is Lady Ellen ?” said he ;

“ I thought to have found her with you, and to have proposed to her and you to join us in a plan which we have been projecting during our ride.”

Lady Arlington inquired what it was.

“ Why, Greville has a fancy to spend a week or two at Hastings ; and, I believe, I shall go with him—I want to persuade you and her to join us—my father does not go—but that is no reason upon earth why you should not. We shall set off to-morrow—and—”

“ There is no reason upon earth, to be sure,” she replied, smiling at the eagerness with which, as he was wont, Osmond proceeded to the realization of any project that possessed him. “ There is only the trifling impediment of my not choosing to go without your father, and of Lady Ellen’s not being able to

go at all—because she has fixed to-morrow for returning home.”

“ Fixed to-morrow for returning home !” he repeated ; “ I never heard her drop a syllable of intending to return home. Surely you must be mistaken ?”

“ I believe it was a sudden thought,” replied her Ladyship.

Osmond looked surprised, and somewhat disconcerted, but did not immediately make any reply.

At last he spoke—

“ Are you aware of any cause for this sudden determination ?” A ready affirmative hovered upon the lips of Lady Arlington ; but not more solicitous to guard her own delicacy than that of her beloved Ellen, she merely replied in general terms, “ that Lady Ellen had

staid with them nearly as long as she usually did ; and that she was anxious now to return home, and to her usual habits, which were naturally most agreeable to her, and which must in some degree, be interrupted by a change of residence."

" So you see, Osmond, you have involuntarily been arranging your plans extremely well," continued she ; " for I believe this place would retain but little attraction for you after our dear Ellen had left it"—and she looked at him with a penetrating glance.

" Certainly, Lady Ellen's society cannot be otherwise than pleasing to me," he replied, colouring deeply as he spoke.

" *Very* pleasing, or something more than *pleasing*, Osmond, I should sup-

pose, by the solicitude with which you have sought it."

"I hope not with too much solicitude," said he, rather hesitatingly.

"That must depend upon your intentions."

"My intentions! — surely, mother, I cannot have been deceiving Lady Ellen! You alarm me. Do be so good as to tell me at once what is the purport of your remarks:" and he spoke with extreme earnestness.

The Countess as earnestly replied :

"I have not the slightest reason to suppose that Lady Ellen has been deceived by your conduct, for I never heard her speak of you but with the highest respect and regard. But certainly, Osmond, if it were merely for the passing gratification of the moment

that you so sedulously have devoted yourself to her, not only this summer, but during the last, also, I must confess that you have very seriously and painfully deceived *me*."

He seemed to be so struck with astonishment at her words, as to be quite at a loss to reply to them; and his mother, trusting that the confusion and remorse to which she attributed his silence would lead to some favourable determination, made no effort on her part to interrupt it.

They walked on some time in silence. At length Osmond spoke; but it was not to give vent to the contrition and good resolve with which the Countess supposed him to be overpowered; but, after the manner of his sex upon these occasions, to lament the deplorable case

of a man like himself—"naturally fond as I am," said he, "of the society of women, and thrown constantly in the way of one, sensible, and accomplished, and related to me, into the bargain, I must not be civil to her"—

"Oh yes—yes—civil—by all means civil," said Lady Arlington, interrupting him with a laugh.

"But I must not encourage any of the sentiments of friendship and regard, which such a woman is calculated to inspire. I must not indulge the innocent pleasure I find in her society, and seek the gratification of it, because if I do, I can have, and ought to have but one intention—however imprudent, and impossible, and absurd, such an intention may be."

Osmond had now talked himself into

a passion ; not indeed from any idea of being injured with unjust suspicions, but, as is usual in these cases, from being conscious that he in some measure deserved them, and provoked that another should be as well aware of it as he was himself.

“ I am sorry to hear from your lips, Osmond,” said Lady Arlington, “ a stale and unworthy excuse for behaviour, which you must be well aware required explanation.”

“ Do you think that is Lady Ellen’s opinion?” he inquired eagerly.

“ Certainly not,” replied the Countess calmly ; “ I have never, as I just now told you, heard her speak of you but with the highest respect. But what does that prove, Osmond ?” she continued. “ Can you, or can I pene-

trate her thoughts? But *you* know as well as I do, what *are*, and what must be the natural views and expectations of every young unmarried woman. You do not know, perhaps, so well, the tenderness, the ardour with which a fond female heart dwells upon, and nourishes the hopes it is the part of your sex to implant in it; often, I fear, but for the sport of disappointing them; and only to afford matter for the gratification of vanity—and thus are tears, and deep distress, ruined health, and broken hearts, rendered subjects of merriment, contemplated awhile with a laugh, and then dismissed with contempt.”

“Good God! mother,” exclaimed Osmond impetuously, “is it of me that you are speaking? Do you confound

me with a class of reptiles, that want the common attributes of humanity?"

"Be calm, Osmond," she replied,—
"violence in repelling an imputation (supposing any made upon you, which there is not) is no proof of its injustice; and some of these reptiles you speak of, would, I make no doubt, evince as much disdain as you do, on hearing such a surmise against them."

"I only ask you to tell me this," said Osmond: but instantly recalling his words, "it is of no use to ask you—you have before evaded the question—I will—yes—I *will* open my heart to Lady Ellen. She well deserves my confidence; I will tell her all that has so long oppressed it, and *she* will not condemn me."

As he said this, he abruptly broke away, and hastened to his own room ; where, after divers difficulties had successively presented themselves, as to the method of imparting his mind to Lady Ellen, he decided, as the measure attended with least embarrassment to both of them, upon writing to her, and, as hastily as he had formed his purpose, proceeded to the execution of it.

It was not, however, till after various beginnings, and the destruction of much writing paper, that he produced a letter which he determined to give her in the course of the day.

He felt that it was a strange measure he was adopting, and what he exactly purposed to himself by it he could not discern : but his desire to exculpate

himself to Lady Ellen, impelled him to proceed in his intention ; and when they met, which was not till the evening, her Ladyship excusing herself from appearing at the dinner table, he impatiently watched an opportunity of taking her apart, for the purpose of presenting her with his epistle. None, however, readily offered itself, for it being the first evening since the arrival of Mr. Greville, that they had been free from company, the conversation was too general, and their party too small, to allow him to monopolize her attention.

He was beginning to fear he should be obliged to abandon his intention, at least for that evening, when Lady Ellen, apologizing, on a plea of indisposition for retiring early, rose, and left the room.

Osmond immediately followed her, and overtook her by the library door.

She turned on hearing footsteps so hastily approaching her, and perceiving him, she smiled ; but supposing him to be passing in his way to his own room, she merely wished him “ good night,” and was proceeding. But Osmond, almost trembling with agitation, took her hand, and without speaking, gently drew her into the library.

In vain were the mental intreaties the poor Ellen addressed to her fluttering heart, to “ be still.” One fond, delightful idea, and one only *would* present itself ; and that the moment so long anticipated, the eventful moment that was to seal her earthly doom with more than earthly felicity, was at last arrived, was

all that her imagination would suffer her to believe.

“ I—I wish to speak with you, Lady Ellen,” were the words of Osmond, as, both of them still standing, she waited the result of his extraordinary behaviour. “ My mother tells me, that you mean to leave us to-morrow!”

She bowed assent—she dared not trust her voice.

“ Permit me, then,” said he, taking his letter from his pocket, “ to request you will read this—I feel, that it is not—” he hesitated a moment, “ it is not what I *ought* to have said to you, at parting; but it is all—” again he paused ere he added with a faltering voice, “ that honour leaves me the power to say.”

As he said this, he for an instant took

her hand, and half raised it to his lips ; but suddenly relinquishing it, with a heavy sigh he rushed from her presence.

The flattering delusion his first words had inspired, faded away before the fatal implication of the last. A heavy foreboding made her linger in her way to her own apartment, and caused her to lay the letter down upon the table, and muse a moment or two, and endeavour to soothe away the treacherous hopes that still fluttered in her bosom, before she dared to open it.

At last, she took it up ; with a feeling of desperation she tore it open, and read as follows :

“ My dear Ellen : It was with some surprise, and much regret, that I heard from my mother this morning of your intention of leaving us.

“ What your loss will be to me, I cannot describe ; to me—who so often have been favoured with your society, and ever pleasing, ever edifying conversation ! These are presumptuous words, and I feel that they ought to be justified. Let me therefore briefly acknowledge, that, besides the gratification arising from the friendship which you have so kindly permitted me to form with you from my earliest years, I had, in the first instance, another motive in so often seeking an intercourse with you during your late visit. A selfish one indeed ! It was to ask your counsel, Ellen, in an affair which has embarrassed me beyond description. Such was the nature of it, however, that though, as you may remember, perpetually tempted to advert to it, I have always found it impossible to disclose it ;

nor can I now do more than speak of it vaguely.

“ During my stay at Woodhurst, I became acquainted with a very young, and lovely girl. I was passionately attached to her; and have but too much cause to believe that my affection was returned.

“ Her family is respectable, but of a situation in life inferior to that in which, according to the usage of society, I ought to seek for the partner of my name and fortune. This was a consideration, however, which did not suggest itself to my mind, till—but Ellen, I feel it impossible to be explicit. Suppose me betrayed by impetuous passion into a situation, which imperiously calls upon me for a sacrifice on one side or the other. I have won the innocent

heart of the most beautiful and affectionate of her sex. By assiduity, by acknowledged attachment, by all that implicates the honour of man, I confess that I have won it. But the world, Ellen ! my father ! my family ! what would they say to such a connexion ? Even my own weak pride, I fear to trust. I fear to be honourable—alas ! I might, perhaps, more justly call it, to be—humane ! Oh, shame, shame upon the coward ! But I can no more.—The conflict which time had a little quelled, is revived within me, and conscience awakes again to be my persecutor.

“ My dear Ellen, you have sometimes been my counsellor ; tell me, where is my path in this labyrinth of error ? Forgive the freedom of this request,

and comfort with your advice, your affectionate

“ OSMOND.”

She finished it—it fell from her hands ! And must we—must we be faithful, and acknowledge her weakness ? Acknowledge that a burst of tears followed the perusal of it, and that long she wept ? Long—very long, she gave indulgence to the mournful feelings with which she beheld the final wreck of every hope.

“ All is ended, indeed !” said she, taking up the letter, which had long laid unheeded at her feet ; “ and every mystery is now solved ! My part was before taken, and this comes well to strengthen it. Be calm — be calm ; my heart—grant me some respite—”

were her mental supplications, as again resuming the letter, she read, or tried to read, his account of his attachment. But this was too much! She could support the possibility of his not loving her; but to contemplate Osmond as attached, passionately attached to another!—

Oh, nature! poor human nature!" she exclaimed, as the idea presented itself to her with a force of reality she in vain endeavoured to combat, "do we stand in need of such lessons as these to learn all thy weakness?" But this humiliation will pass away; I cannot be thus abject—thus mean; no—no; I cannot:" and she walked awhile with hasty steps up and down her room, as if in this manner she sought to disperse the tempest of her mind. "There is

in the world, then," said she, "another being who suffers like me!—like me!—ah, what did he say—what *did* he say of her!" and a surmise fraught with a degree of horror, darted across her mind.

Trembling, and scarcely capable from the tears which almost blinded her, of reading it, she once more attempted to go through the perusal of his letter. "By all that implicates the honour of man!" and she dwelt to a degree of agony upon the words. "His wretchedness on his return home; the remorse and anguish with which he seemed to recollect some recent action! all—all was but too intelligible! "This unhappy girl!—oh, Osmond!"—and she sobbed again, under the wretched conviction of his having involved himself and one, who but for him might have remained

innocent and happy—in dishonour—in infamy !

“ But my part is clear ! I have but one counsel to give,” she continued, starting up, and hastening to her writing-desk, as if she dreaded that the weakness of human nature should defeat her virtuous purpose.

“ But to be so deceived in him !” and the pen fell from her hands, ere yet she had power to address to him a syllable. “ It was his mind I loved ! Oh, witness for me !”—and she raised her streaming eyes to Heaven : “ but, forgive me, oh my Father ; forgive these vain murmurs ! teach me to be resigned ! strengthen me—oh strengthen me to resist these selfish, angry thoughts.

“ I might be silent,” she continued, after a deep and painful musing. “ Yes,

I might refrain from giving the counsel he calls for: but should I not be ungenerous, mean, ignoble, if I have any influence with him, not to use it in behalf of that unhappy creature, whose sufferings I can so well appreciate! She too has wept! Alas! what bitter tears must her's have been! It is enough—it is enough:” and once more raising her eyes in fervent supplication, and clasping her hands with energy together, she stifled with heroic firmness the convulsive sob that was labouring in her breast; and as soon as she had somewhat stilled the internal tumult that shook her frame, she addressed to Osmond the following reply:

“ You have given me the deepest sorrow, Osmond—not only in imparting to me a confession of great misconduct,

but in suffering it to appear that you hesitate *one* moment to act the part which you acknowledge you are called upon, by honour and humanity, to perform. I cannot think so ill of you as to suppose you really pause as to the course you ought to pursue ; or that you can presume to weigh in the same scale—your duty to God—and to man. If such be the case, deliberate, I conjure you no longer—but decide on the side of virtue ; it will be for your final peace—the immediate and conscious approval of your own heart ; the happiness of the being you confess you have injured :—and, if that be of any consequence to you, it will secure for you the continued regard of your friend

“ ELLEN SEYMOUR.”

So pure—so ineffable is the satisfac-

tion which results from a sense of acting virtuously, that it may be questioned whether, on closing this letter, the feelings of Lady Ellen would have been more enviable, had she, instead of a reply of this nature, been dictating an acceptance of Osmond's offered vows.

She had just completed it, when a gentle tap at her door announced a visitor.

She was not disappointed, though a little vexed, to perceive Lady Arlington. She dreaded her tenderness—she felt a deep conviction of the necessity of surrounding herself with the severe, the unbending circumstances of life ; and of flying, as she would from intoxication, the enervating, but bland endearments of unavailing affection.

“ I know that Osmond has been

speaking to you," Lady Arlington was beginning to say; but Lady Ellen, taking her hand, thus interrupted her:

"All is over, my dear kind friend—Osmond has been explicit with me. I have nothing to reproach him with—spare me, I beseech you, any further discussion. To-morrow—I have arranged every thing for my departure, and given orders that it may be early. You will now permit me to say"—she could not add, "farewell;"—but pressing her to her bosom, and kissing her cheek, she tore herself from the embrace of the Countess—ejaculating an entreaty that she would "leave her."

"Unkind Ellen!" said her Ladyship; but casting her eyes upon the uplifted

countenance of that suffering creature, and beholding the struggle that was visibly imprinted upon every agonized feature,—“no—not unkind—never—never any thing but the dearest and the best,” she added—once more folding her to her heart; “it shall be as you wish, my love—God bless you Ellen, God bless you—dear—dear girl,”—she tenderly repeated—and she was gone.

“The trial is ended,” said Lady Ellen; “to-morrow night I shall be in my peaceful dwelling, away from this dangerous place.”

But the trial was *not* quite over: she had yet to undergo a scene, which she had hoped her early departure would have enabled her to escape. It was her meeting again with Osmond.

Anticipating her intentions, he was already walking up and down the hall, when, with her maid attending her, Lady Ellen, in the morning, descended the staircase to enter her carriage.

She shrunk back at the sight of him ; but compelling herself to be calm, she took the arm he offered, declining, however, to enter the library, to which he endeavoured to lead her.

“ You surely breakfast before you go ? ”

She uttered a faint but decided negative ; and taking from her bosom the letter she had written, and which she intended to have dispatched from the first post town at which she arrived, she put it into his hands.

“ I have given my advice,” she said, “ because you requested it, not because

it could be necessary. I should be sorry to suppose you wanted any counsel to direct you in so plain a case."

He coloured deeply as he took the letter—but perceiving that she was walking on, he hastily put it in his pocket, and drawing her arm again within his, he led her to her carriage.

"You will, perhaps, permit me the honour of writing to you the result of this"—he hesitated in painful embarrassment.

"I shall always have an interest in hearing from you," she replied; and hastily withdrawing her hand, which he retained with a tremulous grasp, she hurried into the carriage.

"One moment—yet one moment," said he, preventing the servant from coming forward to shut the door—but

looking at her, he perceived her handkerchief at her eyes—her head turned away—as, sunk back on her seat, she waved her hand to him, as if imploring his absence.

He motioned to the footman to come forward—and with a murmured and broken “farewell” on both sides, the door was closed—the carriage drove off, and they parted.

It was not for some time that Osmond felt any inclination to open the letter she left with him. Her words had prepared him to anticipate its contents.—But her gentle manners, her betrayed affection for him, the charms of her mind, and the superiority of her understanding, had left him little inclination to fulfil the claims of any other candidate for his love. Yet, in recalling the

past—in meditating the decided answer she had given to his doubts,—the decided answer too of his own conscience—the best—the only judge,—he was irresistibly impelled to end at once his harassing situation, by yielding to the dictates of honour—and of Lady Ellen.

“ Yes, she shall be obeyed,” he said, “ I *will* be generous. Generous—my poor Caroline, ought I not rather to say, just ?”

CHAP. IX.



It may now be necessary to make our readers acquainted with the lady whom Osmond thus seriously apostrophized ; for which purpose we must take a retrospect of the events which befel him during his long and mysterious sojourn in the North.

His motive for retiring to his father's neglected seat at Woodhurst, we have already detailed ; but, though it was a sufficiently strong one to send him there, it would have failed to keep him long a resident in a place so obscure, and uninviting in the resources it con-

tained, if chance had not thrown in his way a very powerful and unexpected attraction.

It was no sooner known that he was in the country, than he was visited by the principal persons in the neighbourhood ; with all of whom, he was more or less acquainted, from occasionally appearing amongst them in the sporting season. As he supposed, however, that his stay would be but short (as it usually was) he merely returned their calls, and amusing himself in the morning with his gun, and in the evening with his books, he declined all invitations ; and having staid near a month, was beginning to think of returning to London, when, on looking one morning over the cards that had been left, to see whom he was to call upon at parting, he per-

ceived a name to which he was quite a stranger, and whose visit, he was very certain, he had forgotten to return. "Mr. Elton, of Primrose Cottage!" he repeated, turning the card round and round, and vainly trying to recollect who Mr. Elton could be.

He rang the bell; and inquiring further, he found that Mr. Elton had only called the preceding day—that he was lately settled in that part of the country, and had married a Miss Smith from the neighbouring town.

The matter was now cleared up, for the name of Miss Smith recalled to his remembrance an association of very ridiculous ideas; an election ball, three years since, when his brother, Lord Lessingham, was returned member for the adjoining town; and he himself,

upon that occasion, had danced with, and made outrageous love to this identical Miss Smith ; who was, on her part, so ready to be fallen in love with, that he remembered having very little option left him in the case.

He could scarcely, indeed, have supposed their acquaintance would have authorized a visit from her husband ; but as he knew Lord Arlington to have a devout regard to his own interest, and to pay peculiar attention to all who had, or were likely to have, the most remote influence in promoting it, he had no hesitation in deciding to return the visit he had been favoured with.

What he could recollect of Miss Smith, or more properly Mrs. Elton, represented her as a good-humoured girl,—pretty—but in a vulgar style of

beauty ; shrewd and quick in her observations, but devoid of taste, and withal affected ; but apparently more from a difficulty of knowing how to make herself of consequence, than from any deficiency in understanding.

As Osmond, amongst other evil propensities, had rather a taste for the ridiculous, he set forward upon his walk to Primrose Cottage, with a slight idea of deriving some amusement in renewing his acquaintance with his *ci-devant* partner at the election ball. He had walked a long way in the direction pointed out to him, and ought, as he imagined, to be near the destined spot.

He looked round on every side, but nothing could he see that answered his ideas of a "Primrose Cottage." A cottage there was, however, to the right

of him, set off by a little vulgar veranda of the brightest green: and by what he remembered of Miss Smith, and her ball-room attire, he conceived all this to be exactly in her taste, and concluded this must be her habitation.

Upon inquiry, he found he was right. A dirty little Abigail was cleaning the step of the door; who, to his twice repeated remonstrance, that she would precede him, and announce his name, only answered by pointing with her finger, dripping from the pail, to the parlour door; and perceiving that he did not move, added, “ye’ll find mistress there, I tell ye.”

Being led thus to conclude that not much ceremony was requisite, he followed the mandate of this nymph, and knocked gently at the door of the

room, which she told him contained "*mistress.*"

A much sweeter voice than he recollected his friend Miss Smith to possess, desired him to "come in ;"—which he did, and perceived, not Mrs. Elton, who was not in the room, but one of the loveliest girls he ever saw, sitting on the floor, playing at some game with two children, a boy and girl, apparently about four and five years old. She started up in great confusion at his entrance, and saying "she would call Mrs. Elton," precipitately retired. The children, having looked at him for a short time, resumed their game ; but the little girl soon became uneasy, and began to call for "sister."

"And was that lady who went out just now, your sister, my dear ?" said Osmond.

“ Yes,” said the boy,—“ that was sister.”

“ And what is your name, my man ?”

“ Freddy.”

“ What else ?”

“ Frederick Lascelles,” he replied, “ and that is Kate,” pointing to the little girl.

They were beautiful children ; and transient as was the glimpse Osmond obtained of their still more lovely sister, he fancied in the little girl a resemblance to the sweet, fair, laughing face, she for a moment presented to him, when he first opened the door.

He became impatient for her return, to judge whether his eyes had deceived him, or whether he really had seen a specimen of female beauty more perfect than any he had yet witnessed.

At last he heard a voice lecturing the

handmaid at the door, for not having finished her operations upon the steps at an earlier hour. Mrs. Elton then entered the room accompanied by the fair apparition, which had vanished so speedily. Osmond's hand returned the cordial shake of Mrs. Elton ; but his eyes were fixed upon her companion, whom she introduced to him by slightly naming " Miss Lascelles."

The second view was more decisive than the first, and confirmed him in his opinion of her being the most beautiful creature he had ever seen.

Her figure was slight and delicate, but gracefully formed ; an air of elasticity and lightness pervaded every movement. A statuary could not have desired a more perfect model—nor a

painter, a more lovely countenance: No profusion of stiffly-curled hair concealed any part of it. There was evidently no arrangement—no study in the disposition of the soft auburn ringlets, which here and there lightly played upon her forehead; and yet the arch smile that sported about the bewitching little mouth, and the stolen glance of the deep blue eye, bespoke something of a spirit of coquetry. Altogether she struck him as a complete personification of a poet's dream—sweet seventeen in all its charms; for not a day beyond this age, in fact scarcely so much, did she appear to have attained.

In vain Mrs. Elton laboured to attract his notice, and draw him into conversation: his whole attention was fixed upon

this fascinating girl, who to his great disappointment, announced that she must depart home.

“But, my dear, you have not seen Mr. Elton,” said Mrs. Elton, gravely; “and he wants to speak to you about some book he wishes you to read.”

“Oh dear!—he does lend me such stupid books,” said the laughing girl.

“Stupid books!” repeated Mrs. Elton, in a tone of some displeasure.

“Oh no—no—not stupid, the least in the world. He is very good, I am sure,” said Miss Lascelles, seeming to recollect herself. “’Tis I that am stupid; for I never can remember anything about those Roman Emperors from one day to another.”

Osmond smiled at the *naïveté* of the reply. At that moment their eyes

chanced to meet, and she smiled too ; but instantly repelling it, she assumed a grave, or rather a demure look ; for nothing like gravity could dwell upon such features.

“ What a captivating creature it is ! ” thought Osmond. “ We should besworn friends in half a quarter of an hour ; I have a great mind to walk home with her.”

But whilst he was balancing upon the possibility of this procedure, she had scrambled the boy’s nine-pins into a bag, tied on her own hat, and her little sister’s, shaken hands with Mrs. Eiton, summoned the children with a “ Come, little people — come Kate — come Freddy,” and slightly bowing to him, with an arch expression that he could fancy implied, “ you will think

of me a little while," she was off with the velocity of a bird—leaving him rather too much *distract* to answer as he ought to Mrs. Elton's heavy lamentations, that her dear James was not at home.

"I should have had such pleasure in introducing you to each other, said she—

"What a sweet girl!" said Osmond, following with his eyes from the window, where he stood to watch her, the receding form of the lovely Miss Lascelles.

"Who?" said Mrs. Elton, half turning round.—"Oh! Miss Lascelles:—
"Yes, she is a pretty girl—sadly uneducated though, poor thing!—Mr. Elton takes a deal of pains with her; but she is such a giddy, thoughtless creature,

that it is impossible to make her apply for half an hour together—else she does not want for quickness.”

“Want for quickness!” Osmond repeated; “I never saw a more intelligent, animated countenance.”

“Animated enough!” replied Mrs. Elton, with something of a sneer; “I think it would be as well if it were rather less so. But, as I often tell her, I fear those laughing eyes of her’s will some time or other shed a great many tears.”

“And upon what foundation do you build such a melancholy prophecy?”

“Upon a knowledge of her character,” she replied, gravely.

“A knowledge of her character!” he repeated with some astonishment, and even alarm; for it really would have

given him a pang to have heard the faintest surmise against the purity of so lovely a creature.

“O, don’t imagine, Mr. Lessingham, that I have a syllable to say against her in a moral point of view,” said Mrs. Elton. Osmond breathed again—and she proceeded: “she is the sweetest tempered girl that ever lived, and the most affectionate. But so childish—so inconsiderate—always laughing—never serious upon any subject—and really now, as I tell her, she is getting too old for such nonsense, as playing at marbles with those children; it is not proper to see a great girl of sixteen romping on the floor.”

“She must be seen to very great advantage in any situation,” Osmond replied, with emphasis.

“ I really believe you are smitten with Miss Lascelles,” said Mrs. Elton.

“ Oh no,” he replied, with a smile—and the recollection of Lady Ellen returned to his mind, from whence it had for a short time vanished. “ But I have some curiosity in my disposition, and I should like to know a little of the history of Miss Lascelles.”

“ As for her history, that is very soon told,” replied Mrs. Elton. “ Her father is neither more nor less than a respectable farmer, living in this village ; a superior man in his line, or, of course, you will suppose, Mr. Elton would not be upon visiting terms with him or his family.”

Osmond bowed in acquiescence, though he did not know why : for, judging of Mr. Elton by such of his

appointments as he saw, he did not imagine how he could be degraded by visiting any of his neighbours, however humble.

“ Mrs. Lascelles,” continued Mrs. Elton, “ is a woman of birth, the daughter of a gentleman of consequence and fortune ; but unluckily she disobliged him by her marriage, and at his death he disinherited her. Mr. Lascelles having but a small fortune, the consequence has been, that ever since their marriage they have had to struggle with difficulties, for which she was but ill prepared by education ; and her temper never being very good, she has been always rather a source of trouble to her husband and family, than any thing like a comfort. She very seldom goes out—choosing to fancy herself in ill

health, though most people believe she assumes a plea of indisposition, merely as an excuse for her peevishness and ill-humour."

"And Mr. Lascelles—what sort of a person is he?"

"A very excellent, and a very sensible man ; the best of fathers and of husbands ; always treating his whimsical wife with a respect and consideration, which shews that he feels for the humiliation to which her connexion with him has reduced her. He is perfectly idolized by his children, to whom he is only too indulgent—suffering them to follow their own way, rather more than I think is quite safe. Mr. Elton is pleased with Caroline, and takes great pains in improving her taste, by directing her choice of books, and—"

“Is Miss Lascelles the eldest of the family?” inquired Osmond, rather more interested in talking of her than her tutor.

“She is,” replied Mrs. Elton. “There are six of them: two boys are gone to school; and besides the two children you saw with her, there is one younger at home.”

“I cannot imagine,” said he, musing upon what she had told him, “I cannot imagine how a girl, in the line of life you describe Miss Lascelles to be, should be distinguished by so much grace and elegance as she is—so entirely removed from any thing that is common or vulgar.”

“She has very great natural advantages,” replied Mrs. Elton; “and, besides, as I have already told you, Mr.

Lascelles is himself a very superior man in his line. Though he lives in a farmhouse, and follows the profession of a farmer, you would be very apt to mistake him for a gentleman, if you saw him under other circumstances. Mrs. Lascelles, with all her whims and caprices, has perfectly the habits and manners of a gentlewoman; and Caroline having always been with her, it is not so very wonderful that she should have acquired an ease and gentility of deportment, not perhaps usual in her situation. But I confess, Mr. Lessingham, I conceive you exaggerate her merits ;” and Mrs. Elton looked a little disconcerted.

“ It would be strange, indeed, if you did not conceive so !” thought he, “ considering your sex ;” but he was spared

the difficulty of replying to her remark, by her jumping up from her chair in a transport of joy, at the sound of a growling voice, which, speaking in a scolding tone to some one without, appeared to approach the door.

“ Oh here is Mr. Elton !” she exclaimed, opening the door for him, and ushering in a pale, vulgar-looking man, with very white hair, small cunning eyes, a nose that turned up with a sneering expression, and altogether of a physiognomy so decidedly bad, that the first glance sufficed to pronounce upon it.

“ The Honourable Mr. Lessingham, my love,” said Mrs. Elton. “ Mr. Lessingham, I need not say that this is my dear Mr. Elton.”

Osmond bowed politely to the formal flourish about “ happiness,” and

“honour,” with which Mr. Elton replied to his wife’s introductory speech.

This ceremony over, he begged to know whether she had offered Mr. Lessingham refreshments?

“We have been talking so earnestly that I quite forgot, but I hope Mr. Lessingham will excuse me,” she replied.

Osmond readily expressed his forgiveness, and declined the offered civility.

“Miss Lascelles has been here, my love,” she continued, “and *my friend* Mr. Lessingham has fallen in love with her, I believe; so I have been gratifying his anxious inquiries into her history.”

“Oh! indeed;” he replied, with a smile that Osmond fancied supercilious, only that the whole expression of his face bordered upon such a continual sneer, that it was difficult to determine when

it varied. "Well, and what history did you give?" he continued.

"I gave him the history of my dear Mr. Elton's kindness to her," she replied, with a languishing smile, laying her hand at the same time upon his shoulder, and looking up in his face with a delight that was perfectly astonishing to Osmond, if it were real, but which he believed was partly assumed for the sake of effect; Mrs. Elton appearing to him to have a taste for *scenes*.

"You are a happy man, sir, in possessing so beautiful a pupil," observed Osmond.

Upon this remark Mr. Elton, with an easy, *degagée* sort of an air, took a toothpick from his pocket, and having genteelly operated with it for a short

time, replied carelessly, and as if it were a thing by the bye, though self-conceit sat in every line of his countenance, "one really could not, you know, Mr. Lessingham—one really could not suffer the poor child to run to ruin; I believe I have been a friend to her in some respects, but Maria, my love, it was not proper—you should not have spoken of this."

"And thus he always tries to do away the merit of his actions," said Mrs. Elton, still languishing on his shoulder.

"This is rather too good: I shall never support this," thought Osmond; "a dose of ipecacuanha could not be half so overpowering;" and he rose to take his leave.

The raptures of the lady prevented

her, he supposed, from noticing the movement he made to depart; but Mr. Elton begged him not to be in a hurry, and requested him to take a walk with him over his grounds, before he went.

As Osmond supposed this walk would not occupy much time, he assented; Mrs. Elton proposing also to join them. "You have been a truant from me ever since nine o'clock this morning," said she, seizing her husband's arm, "and I am determined you shall not escape me any more this day."

"I assure you, Mr. Lessingham," said she, turning to Osmond; "I sometimes don't see him for the whole of the day, or if he does look into the *boudoir*, it is only for five minutes."

"Like angel visits, few and far between," said Osmond.

She smiled as if she thought the quotation very apposite, but Mr. Elton eyed his guest with a little distrust; but he was soon immersed in the importance of displaying his possessions, and pointing out the alterations he intended to make in “this field, and “*that barn,*” and the improvements he meditated in “Primrose Cottage” itself, “which was now, as Osmond must have observed, a mere temporary thing, very unfit to place Mrs. Elton in, but circumstances had occupied him so much since he married, &c.”

He thus continued to talk of himself, and his concerns, without evincing any doubt, by his manner, of Osmond’s finding as much entertainment and interest in the subject as he did.

The forbearance of Osmond during this trial of his patience, was rewarded by an invitation to dinner the following week, which nothing would certainly have induced him to accept, but a hope, scarcely definable, that he might see again the charming Caroline.

CHAP. X.



OSMOND condemned himself for a coxcomb in taking great pains to look as well as he could, when he made his toilette previous to appearing at Mr. Elton's dinner party ; and, as the event turned out, it was labour in vain, for Caroline was not there.

“ Well,” thought he, “ I need not have troubled myself about my looks.”

However, as he was willing “ to take the goods the gods provided,” he endeavoured, as far as his great indifference about them permitted, to play the agreeable to two very smart ladies,

between whom he was seated ; whose encouraging smiles inspired him with a just expectation that his attentions would be gratefully received, and removed all difficulty as to what mode of entertainment would best succeed with them, by betraying as much folly as any reasonable man would desire to amuse himself withal.

These two young ladies, Miss Agnes and Miss Matilda Burton, with their father, a pompous personage, whom Osmond discovered to be a clergyman, by the dignity with which he spoke of " his curate ;" their mother, an elderly lady in looks, in dress as youthful as her daughters, and a Mr. Sackville, a quiet, gentlemanly young man, whom he was slightly acquainted with before, and

who resided at Woodhurst as the curate of the village, made up the party.

As Osmond was a very thoughtless person, it never occurred to him that under the roof of Mr. Elton, where bad taste and vulgarity seemed to strive for pre-eminence, there could be any *mal adresse* in mentioning any name whatever; he therefore took an opportunity, when the cloth was removed, and the servants withdrawn, of asking Mrs. Elton, "If she had seen Miss Lascelles, lately?"

He smiled as he made the inquiry, which was in so low a tone of voice, that he did not expect to be overheard, and he hoped he was not, when he observed Mrs. Elton, though he could not for the soul of him tell why, look red,

and disconcerted, as people sometimes do when a subject is started rather *mal à propos*.

She whispered a negative, and began to talk of something else; but the eldest Miss Burton, with more curiosity than politeness, desired to know "the name of the lady, Osmond inquired after."

"Oh, nobody of any consequence; merely a person Mr. Lessingham met here the other morning," said Mrs. Elton.

"As charming a person as I ever desire to behold," observed Osmond; rather maliciously resolved to mortify the preposterous pride, which he suspected was at the bottom of Mrs. Elton's embarrassment, on hearing the name of Miss Lascelles introduced.

"Who was it? I insist upon know-

ing," said Miss Burton, jogging Osmond's arm, with the air of one who was conscious that her freedom only rendered her the more captivating.

"Yes—do make him tell you, Agnes," said Miss Matilda, seconding her sister's command.

"I have not the slightest reluctance in the world to name Miss Lascelles," replied Osmond, enjoying the pause which at that moment made the name sufficiently audible to the whole party.

Mr. Elton looked at his wife, with an eye that very plainly said, "what business had you to introduce such vulgar names in such a party as this?"

"Lascelles!" repeated Mr. Burton, "Is that Lascelles the farmer's pretty daughter?"

"The same," replied Mr. Elton.

“ We know but very little of them. The bottle stands with you, Mr. Lessingham.”

“ Know but very little of them, Mr. Elton !” replied Osmond, laying his hand on the decanter, but making no movement to pass it, or to drop the subject ; “ that surely—pardon me, but that surely must be a mistake. Miss Lascelles is your pupil, you know ; you lent her something to read about the Roman Emperors, whose history she declared, with irresistible *naïveté*, that she never could remember from one day to another. Know nothing of them ! oh, don’t be so ungrateful ! I only wish I knew half as much ! I only wish she would constitute me her tutor !”

Osmond endeavoured to speak as much as possible in jest, yet he but ill

concealed the contempt that filled his soul, when his rapid temper enabled him to take in, at one view, all the paltry motives that actuated the conduct of both Mr. and Mrs. Elton on this occasion.

“ The impression Miss Lascelles has made upon you appears to be very deep, Sir,” said Mr. Elton, looking white with anger, which he tried to conceal under the very doubtful smile into which he curled his lip.

“ Who is this young person ?” said Mrs. Burton ; “ I don’t remember to have heard of her.”

“ My dear !” said Mr. Burton, with a grave look, as if he would guard her against the chance of shewing any contempt for Mr. Elton’s intimate friends, “ you know Mr. Lascelles very well ; you must have seen him with his family at

church on a Sunday ; nay, it is possible that you may have seen Mr. Lascelles at the Parsonage. He is a man I could have no objection whatever to admit to my table ; a very respectable man," turning to Mr. Elton with a glance of encouragement which might very readily be translated into, " Don't be overpowered with my discovering your vulgar connexions—I will make the best of it."

While the old gentleman was making this pompous harangue, the young ladies were repeating to one another, " Miss Lascelles ! Miss Lascelles !" " what that child who sits next pew to us at church !"

" Dear me," said Miss Matilda, as soon as her father had ceased to speak, " is that little fair girl, that comes to

church with a parcel of children every Sunday, the great beauty that Mr. Lessingham makes such a fuss about, Mrs. Elton?"

"The very same," replied that lady ;
"and now you will think, I dare say, of the mountain and the mouse."

"The mountain and the mouse, indeed!" she repeated. Then, after a moment's pause, "She is a delicate, fair little thing : but such a child ! she cannot be more than fourteen !"

"Oh, yes—yes," replied Mrs. Elton, "she is almost seventeen. She certainly is pretty, but really, I think, not worth quite so much conversation."

"Indeed I think not," said Mr. Elton very gloomily ; and again glancing at his wife with an eye that said,

“ This is your doing ; you have sunk me in the estimation of our genteelest acquaintance.”

Osmond observed, that during the whole of this discussion Mr. Sackville sat perfectly silent, not because he was indifferent to the subject, for he watched his countenance once or twice, and he was persuaded that it betrayed a marked interest in what was said.

There was evident contempt in his smile, when old Burton pronounced Mr. Lascelles to be a “ respectable man.” Osmond had no doubt that he not only knew Mr. Lascelles, but esteemed him as infinitely superior to the persons who were condescending to give an opinion upon him.

This conjecture was confirmed, when,

after the ladies had withdrawn, and conversation happening to fall upon field sports, he took an opportunity, whilst Mr. Elton and his other guest were in discourse, to say to Osmond, in a low voice, “ If you are not likely to consider yourself as too much degraded, Sir, and will do me the favour to breakfast with me to-morrow morning, I will introduce you to Mr. Lascelles ; who will shew us some excellent sport over his grounds.”

It may be supposed that Osmond accepted, without hesitation, his proposal. They both exchanged smiles when he said in reply, “ that he was not apprehensive of serious consequences from meeting Mr. Lascelles.” It was not necessary, nor at that time

would it have been prudent to say more ; it was sufficient that they understood each other.

The evening's entertainment was enlivened by what Mr. Elton called " some *music*," in which delightful science, his wife obligingly informed the company, he was considerably skilled.

" But don't let this discourage you, my dear Miss Matilda," she continued, addressing the youngest Miss Burton, who rather hung back from accepting the hand with which Mr. Elton was going to usher her up to an old trumpery piano-forte.

" Oh no,—I beg it may not," said he. " Mrs. Elton is partial ; she magnifies my knowledge of music : I am not now to be dreaded—I have been much out of practice of late."

Under these assurances, Miss Matilda

suffered herself to be prevailed upon to occupy the music stool, and after having thumped a few preliminary chords on the old piano, and looked up to the ceiling a proper time, she struck off, into what, she informed the audience was “*an air.*” Judging by the raptures into which she threw Mr. Elton, and the importance with which he beckoned his wife to come and look on, while he, by various grimaces, pointed out to her such parts of Miss Matilda’s performance as it would be proper to admire, it might be surmised that it was very fine: but Osmond, as he indeed expected he should, soon discovered that the performer and the instrument were much upon a par.

The air concluded, Mr. Elton called upon his lady to exhibit, engaging to aid her by an accompaniment on the flute.

After some interchange of raillery upon some jest, which nobody seemed to understand but themselves, they also favoured their guests with “*an air.*”

“A medley rondo of my dearest Mr. Elton’s *own* arranging!” said Maria, by way of preparing the company in general to be charmed; and giving warning, fortunately, to Osmond in particular, not to shew too much disgust, as perhaps, from the turn of his countenance at that moment, she might anticipate with some dread.

He endeavoured, therefore, as well as he could, to disguise the propensity he felt to laugh or to cry—for, as extremes meet, he verily believed he could as soon have done one as the other—when his irritable nerves were assaulted and mangled by the horrible discord and

confusion of this ‘ medley rondo ;’ enduring, as it did, a full quarter of an hour, without mercy or compassion.

To say nothing of the barbarous, atrocious taste, which could mingle together ten bars of one of Corelli’s solos, as many from a concerto of Handel, half a page of “ Moll in the Wad,” and part of the “ Overture to Lodoiska,” terminating with “ the minuet in Berenice,” the style in which this jumble was executed sufficed of itself to make the whole quite insupportable. And when Mr. Elton, blowing as if he were in his last agonies, with haste to overtake his wife, who had got into the middle of “ the overture to Lodoiska,” by imprudently forgetting to wait till he had finished his cadenza upon the concluding bar of Handel’s concerto, and Mrs. Elton, terrified in

discovering by his frowns and stamping foot that something was wrong, though she did not know what, began to look upon each other with mutual accusation—the case appeared so desperate, that Mr. Sackville, as a man of humane feelings, imagining it would be charitable, began to talk to Miss Burton.

Mr. Burton, also, awakened by this “hurly-burly” from a transient slumber into which he had fallen upon a corner of the sofa, having rubbed his eyes and repeated several times “charming! charming!” inquired of his wife if it were not time to order the carriage.

This question being answered in the affirmative, Osmond hoped that the commotion which followed in ringing the bell, would have led to a deliverance from the “medley.” But it was mercilessly persevered in, and his hopes

mocked to the very last; for when he congratulated himself, on hearing an outrageous chord struck by Mrs. Elton, that it would be the last, he found he had still to endure several bars from the flute, which had never recovered the advantage that had been taken over it on the subject of Handel; but which nobly maintained its rights to the conclusion, though it was left with none to dispute them.

Various plaudits succeeded. Mrs. Burton having been able to distinguish “Moll in the Wad,” gave her testimony with great politeness to the merits of “old Scotch tunes,” and concealed, amidst her encomiums, the pleasure with which she heard her carriage announced, and the alacrity with which she proceeded to shawl herself for her escape. “Aye, Mr. Elton,” putting

on her tippet, and adjusting it with a complacent look, that said, "Thank God! this tedious day is over. I always do say, Mr. Elton," she continued, "that there is no music like the old music. And so it was your own arrangement! Well, I declare, (pray Mr. Burton, tie your handkerchief about your neck) I do assure you, Mr. Elton, it does you infinite credit—such pretty tunes!"

"My dear Matilda, (put on your cloak,) really it does you great credit. Mrs. Elton, I have the honor to wish you good night."

The departure of this family, from carrying off with it a considerable degree of restraint, appeared to be the signal for Mrs. Elton's taking her place near her husband's chair, and coaxingly inquiring of him "why he had looked so grave all the afternoon?"

He muttered something in reply, and a whispering dialogue ensued between them, which Osmond only interrupted to take his leave ; Mr. Sackville following his example.

As their road home lay for a considerable part of the way in the same direction, Osmond took an opportunity, as they walked along, of making a few inquiries respecting the Lascelles family, about whom he felt strangely interested.

He began by expressing surprise that Mr. Lascelles, being, as he had heard, a man of sense, should allow such a superficial, conceited coxcomb as this Elton, to talk about his services to his daughter's understanding.

Mr. Sackville laughed so heartily at this remark, that for some time he made no answer ; at last,

“ I find,” said he, “ that you know

but little of the gentleman with whom we have been spending the day ; a more notorious liar (it is a coarse expression, but I can think of no other so applicable) cannot exist ; but as, like others of that stamp, he founds his fables upon just so much truth as makes it difficult to say they are absolute fabrications, he contrives to escape from being confronted with his falsehoods. *He* undertake to improve Caroline's understanding ! A girl, who, with all her thoughtlessness of character, and the plain education of a mere farmer's daughter, has a shrewdness of intellect, that soars far above *his* comprehension ! It is true that he has tried to pester her with a few dry, ill chosen books, of which he himself knows nothing but the names ; but it has been

merely for the sake of giving himself consequence by chattering about it."

"When it appears that it can be done safely," said Osmond, "which I suppose it could not, to-day."

"Oh, no, no; not to-day:" and he laughed. "It is a comical world, to be sure, that we live in; and things must have reached the very acmé of absurdity before two such fools as this Elton and old Burton should think themselves degraded, by framing their mouths to pronounce the name of such a man as Mr. Lascelles."

"He really is then a very superior man?" said Osmond.

"In any line of life he must have been considered so," he replied: "if strict integrity, simplicity, and kindness of heart, and plain, manly sense, constitute superiority; and these qualities he has

preserved unshaken through many adverse scenes.”

“ He was unfortunate in his marriage, I think Mrs. Elton told me ?”

“ He was unfortunate in marrying a very fine lady,” replied Sackville, “ who did him the favour to fall desperately in love with him. With her he had no dowry but her beauty, a vast stock of whims and caprices, and what clothes she had on when she ran away with him. Her father, after keeping them in suspense several years about his forgiveness, died suddenly, without revoking a will he had made in the height of his displeasure, by which his daughter was left without a penny, at a time when an increasing family augmented the difficulties which already surrounded them. Too independent to make any advances to that branch of the family into which his wife’s natural property had fallen,

Mr. Lascelles met his troubles only with a resolution to surmount them by patient and persevering industry. He fell into no tricks, no thriving speculations, so often the resort of querulous poverty, but kept the straight turnpike road of life; satisfied with the approbation of his own heart, and deriving no common portion of happiness in the bosom of a numerous and very charming family."

"And the mother," said Osmond, "how does she support her troubles?"

"Oh, the mother is nobody," he replied; "all the part she takes in any thing is to find fault, and bewail her hard fate, and complain of her health, and sit in an easy chair, reading a novel when she is not complaining."

"Then who takes the management of the household affairs, for this pretty Caroline is too young I imagine to be of much use in that respect?"

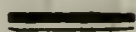
“ Why, in addition to his children to maintain,” replied Mr. Sackville, “ this worthy man supports an elderly maiden sister, who is an excellent person in her way ; and with all the characteristics of her suffering sex, superintends the domestic duties of the house, stands god-mother to the children, brings them up, and patiently supports the ill-humour and civil insults of Mrs. Lascelles.”

“ She is, I suppose,” said Osmond, “ just what a maiden aunt is so often condemned to be ?”

“ Exactly so,” he replied ; “ and now the family history of Mr. Lascelles is fortunately brought to a conclusion, just where I must have ended it, for here I believe our road separates.”

And reminding him to be punctual with his gun at an early hour the next morning, Mr. Sackville took his leave.

CHAP. XI.



ON repairing to his appointment on the following day, Osmond found Mr. Lascelles already there.

Had he not been told that he was a man superior to his condition, he would have expected it from his appearance. Apparently he touched upon fifty years of age; but the remains of personal beauty, and of that indefinable quality which is called grace, sufficiently indicated that there had once been an excuse for the indiscreet attachment of his wife. His manners were perfectly

polite, but a little reserved, evidently the result of a sensible mind, conscious of its deserving notice, but aware of the opinion of society upon the circumstances of rank and situation, desirous of preserving its own respectability, by keeping within, rather than advancing in the slightest degree beyond its allotted sphere.

The intercourse of the day soon improved their acquaintance into a degree of familiarity, which Osmond liked much better than the reserve with which Mr. Lascelles first met him.

His character being open and ingenuous, Mr. Lascelles soon found that it was not necessary to entrench himself against any pride Osmond might happen to carry about him. Pride enough he had; but it was not of that ordinary

kind, which recoils from coming in contact with those, who, from want of rank or fortune, are often considered (strangely enough) as inferiors.

They found themselves, at the close of their day's sport, so much nearer to the habitation of Mr. Lascelles, than their own, that both Mr. Sackville and Osmond made no opposition to his request that they would partake of the dinner which awaited his return.

On entering a small garden, extremely neat, and tastefully ornamented here and there with stands of flowers and plants, Osmond perceived upon the step of the door, as if watching her father's approach, the same sweet girl whose image had made so strong an impression upon him.

"Well, dear papa," said she, springing

forward to meet him,—but perceiving a stranger, she checked herself, and with a slight curtesy to Mr. Sackville, she glanced at Osmond with the same indescribable archness that had captivated him so unaccountably.

“ My daughter,” said Mr. Lascelles, slightly introducing her, and then continuing his conversation with them ; but it was easy to perceive, through this carelessness of demeanour, the delight of the father’s heart, when Caroline, linking her arm in his, brought an involuntary smile of tenderness upon his countenance.

As they approached the house, the same little boy and girl Osmond had before seen, came running to greet their father. The boy was reduced to order by Caroline’s remonstrances, and he

allowed her to lead him quietly by the hand, whilst he poured forth his inquiries as to "how many partridges papa had killed?" but the girl was not to be pacified till he had complied with the intreaties of "carry me, papa—" "I want to come up"—"pray papa," with which she pursued him.

"You begin early to shew off the woman, my Katie," said Mr. Lascelles, taking her into his arms; "but the shortest way to deal with you all, is to let you have your own way."

Osmond quite glowed with admiration of the charming group. "Monarchs, look down from your thrones," he thought, "and envy this obscure, but happy man!"

"I will go and prepare mamma," said Caroline, tripping on before them,

when they were within a few yards of the hall door.

It was then Osmond anticipated something of a cloud to their enjoyment, from the character he had heard of "*mamma.*" But Mrs. Lascelles, like all judicious persons, reserved her ill-humour for the particular entertainment of her husband and family, when they were in private. She received them with the utmost courtesy ; and with that intuitive politeness, which characterizes the woman of good birth and education, directing herself to Osmond with marked civility and attention. She was still eminently beautiful ; and her personal attractions received an acquisition from the air of dejection and languor that pervaded them.

Osmond could easily imagine, with all

her faults, how fervent and lasting must be the attachment a woman like her would excite in the breast of a man, whom she had made the father of such children as then surrounded Mr. Lascelles; for, in addition to those he brought into the dining-room with him, another little creature, apparently not two years old, was sporting by her side on the sofa, and immediately on their entrance, set up its voice to join the general chorus of “papa’s come home!”

This uproar having continued for some time, rather increased than quelled by the laughing attempts of Caroline to reduce them to silence, a gleam of habitual temper at last broke from Mrs. Lascelles, as with a querulous tone she begged for a little peace. “Now pray, Carry, for one moment is it impossible

to be quiet? You are worse than the children—let them go to the nursery.”

“ Yes, mamma, directly,” said the sweet tempered girl, leading off the little rebels with great difficulty.

A pale, quiet-looking personage then entered the room, whom, had not Osmond heard introduced to him, as “ Miss Lascelles, my sister,” he should still have recognized as the inestimable maiden aunt, who lived for the worthy purpose of making herself useful.

She seated herself, and was silent ; and Mrs. Lascelles looked at her carelessly as she did so, and then, as if considering that silence was her portion, took no further notice of her, but pursued a remark she was making to Osmond. But Mr. Lascelles, with that

benevolence of heart which wishes to give proper consequence to every one, addressed his sister by two or three trivial remarks, evidently made for no other purpose than to remove the humiliating sensation which accompanies the idea of being too unimportant to be noticed.

The dinner was plain, but excellent of the kind, and served with an attention to all the decorum which comfort, and indeed taste would require.

There is a line of truth runs through every thing ; though sometimes so fine and delicate, as hardly to be perceptible ; yet in the minutest circumstances of life, in the adjustment of a dinner table, or in the arrangement of furniture, an observing eye can amuse itself in tracing the features of the superintending mind.

Osmond's chair at dinner happened to be next to Caroline, and he readily endeavoured to improve the opportunity it afforded him of getting better acquainted with her. This he found, was a task of no great difficulty, for frankness of disposition appeared to be a leading trait in the character of this laughing daughter of love; for such her beauty, her youth, her irresistible *naïveté*, might justly proclaim her. Had nature mingled one grain of dissimulation in her composition, she would have been the veriest coquette in existence; but truth had claimed her for its own. In the most insinuating smile,—in the most betraying glance, there was nothing disguised, nothing but what all the world might read, and condemn if it liked—the consciousness of beauty,

and the natural desire of having it admired.

“ Papa, do you know Mr. Elton has been here,” said she, interrupting Osmond, as he was rather insidiously describing the conflict he underwent, between his inclination and his sense of propriety, upon the subject of attending her home, on the day he chanced to meet her at that gentleman’s house.

“ And, papa, do you know that you have got into very great disgrace with him,” she continued, “ for presuming to go out shooting to-day, without letting him know. And as for me, I am worse than ever, about the Roman Emperors.”

“ Stupid enough, I dare say, Carry,” replied Mr. Lascelles ; “ I think if I were Mr. Elton, I would try you with

some of the early Christian fathers, perhaps your genius may lay for theological reading."

"If my small library were likely to afford you any amusement," said Osmond—

"Ah, you had better make interest with Mr. Lessingham," said Mr. Lascelles, laughing; "perhaps he will be kind enough to help you to a few sonnets, which you can mix up with Mr. Elton's Roman Emperors, and taking the draught night and morning for a few weeks, it is astonishing what a clever person you may be expected to prove, Carry."

"And so you really disclaim, with your whole heart, these unfortunate Roman Emperors?" said Osmond, exceedingly amused with the artlessness

that could acknowledge a truth, which nineteen women out of twenty would have been content to be silent upon.

“ Oh, it is all very proper that you men, Mr. Lessingham, should pore over these old stories if you like ;” she replied, “ but Æsop’s fables are, to my mind, quite as instructive, and ten times more entertaining : and there, moreover, you have the moral ready picked and gathered, and tacked to the story without the trouble of hunting after it—if one could but read it.”

“ Come, come,” said Mr. Lascelles, vainly trying to assume a look of gravity wherewith to check the volubility of this evidently darling child,—“ how you prattle, Caroline !” But a feeling of delighted affection *would* send the ready smile to his countenance, in opposition

to the more reproving aspect which it seemed as if his better judgment suggested.

Caroline, however, as if aware of her power, continued to rattle on ; throwing out every now and then, in the midst of her random gaiety, some shrewd remarks, sufficiently indicative of her possessing from nature that fineness of *tact* which supplies the place of education and experience, and which, in fact, neither education nor experience can ever impart, though they may considerably improve.

Mr. Lascelles himself appeared to be particularly distinguished by this indefinable faculty. A tone of unaffected calmness and almost quiet indifference, pervaded his whole conversation ; but in whatever he said there was meaning,

and not an obvious or common-place meaning. Osmond could not help fancying that, if he would but take the trouble, he could talk to the purpose upon most subjects, although he treated them with a dry kind of humour that made it difficult to say how far they interested him.

To a person who delighted, as Osmond did, in perusing human nature in all her various readings, it was amusing enough to contrast the disposition of him and his wife. In Mr. Lascelles he could trace an inclination to make the best of life ; to laugh rather than to cry, since nine times out of ten it is as easy for a wise man to do one as the other ; and, in short, philosopher-like, to let events, good as well as bad, slide away into forgetfulness as fast as they could.

On her side, a diligent eye might perceive, through all her study to conceal it, a restlessness of mind that precluded a moment's peace. Far from striving after that forgetfulness, which is, perhaps, the very essence of happiness, Osmond was certain, from the querulous expression that sometimes passed across her features, that she suffered nothing to escape her ;—that, with the avidity of an irritable disposition, she caught at the most trifling source of sorrow, and not only gave to the vexations of life their lawful proportion of suffering, but such as the fanciful and unjust demands of imagination might chuse to claim.

As this, however, was a disease of mind, which he, unfortunately, in a degree understood, and as her complaints had at any rate the recommendation of

novelty to him, he listened with a disposition to compassionate her case, when she told him, as a preliminary to their engaging in a rubber in the evening, that, "she had not known what it was to be out of her room after eight o'clock, till that night, for at least a twelve-month."

"It is impossible to conceive what dreadful health I have, Mr. Lessingham," she continued; "but I never get the least pity—there is Mr. Lascelles," dealing the cards at him with an angry jerk, "I believe he does not know the meaning of the word illness."

"I ought, my dear, by this time," he replied, with a quiet smile, "for I have had opportunity enough of studying it in all its varieties."

"I don't know what opportunity,"

she replied, "for I never knew you to have a day's indisposition in my life."

"No; but as you have never a day's health, my love, and you and I are one, it comes to the same thing, you know. Carry, come and sit here, and bring me good luck."

Caroline having complied with a smiling "yes, papa," a new source of discomfort appeared to have broken in upon the complaining Mrs. Lascelles.

"And there is Caroline, too," said she, "just like you, so robust, so prodigiously full of health—it is no wonder that my complaints are very little cared for, when nobody in the house knows what it is to suffer a moment's pain except myself."

"Dear mamma, you forget how long poor aunt Catherine was laid up last

winter with the rheumatism," said Caroline.

" Good gracious, Mr. Lascelles ! what have you trumped my king of hearts ?" said Mrs. Lascelles, without noticing Caroline's remark. Then, upon the lively girl's jumping up hastily, " Dear me, Caroline, don't be fidgeting about so ! you make me quite nervous. Miss Lascelles," addressing the maiden aunt, who was sitting in great tranquillity at work, " do pray see what is the matter with those children ; they are making a shocking noise overhead ; I don't know a card I play."

These ebullitions of temper, a little more forcibly exhibited than they would otherwise have been, by the searching trial of ill luck at the card-table, were

received by Mr. Lascelles in patient silence ; now and then a faint smile played about his mouth, but it was scarcely perceptible ; and, as her wailings were vented in the tones of a very soft and pleasing voice, they were not of a character to disturb his serenity to any great degree.

Mr. Sackville appeared to be familiarized to them all, by habits of intimacy. He called Caroline by her christian name ; and Osmond really felt a little ashamed of himself, when he found at his heart a slight repugnance, very like the germ of jealousy, at his taking this freedom.

“ Is it possible,” he thought, as he once caught himself gazing at her with an ardour of which he was quite un-

conscious, till her sweet eyes fell beneath his, and an eloquent blush deepened the soft vermillion that mingled with the transparent whiteness of her complexion, “ is it possible that the impression Lady Ellen Seymour has made upon my heart can be so soon effaced? by the charms too of such a child as this—such a mere child !”— It was in vain he repeated the appellation, as though he would impress it on his belief.

Her artlessness, her docility, her simplicity of character, were all that could justify the epithet. The symmetry and grace of the perfect form, the archness of the sparkling glance, the quick coming and as quick receding blush, beautiful testimony to the presence of

emotions as captivating as they were new, bespoke the woman—the dangerous—the too charming woman.

He sighed as he contemplated the hazard of his situation; but not gathering resolution to take the only safe and proper step, of flying from temptation the moment it was observed, he yielded to the delirium that was creeping over his senses, and before he parted with her on that night, his busy fancy had more than once imaged the ineffable happiness which might be shared with Caroline Lascelles!

Mrs. Lascelles, with whom Osmond congratulated himself upon having incurred much favour, from the compassionate attention he had shewn to her sorrows, urged him to return again

soon and give her her revenge at a rubber.

As they had now made considerable advances towards intimacy, Osmond ventured to follow the example of Mr. Sackville, in taking the fair hand of Caroline when he withdrew.

She replied to him with less vivacity than to Mr. Sackville ; but he fancied there was more of genuine pleasure in her smile when directed to himself.

His heart was too full of one subject to admit of his saying much upon any other to his companion as they walked home.

“ Yes, she is a lovely creature, to be sure,” replied Mr. Sackville, in answer to Osmond’s rapturous expressions of admiration. “ I don’t know whether I

should not fall in love with her myself, if I had nothing else to do—but the having to read for priests' orders is a great quietus to all idle feelings."

Osmond could only admire and envy the comfortable temperament which applied itself so calmly to the duties of life; satisfied to fall in love as the mere alternative of having nothing else to do.

CHAP. XII.



WE must abbreviate the variety of arguments Osmond used, to persuade himself that his time was passed as well at Woodhurst as it would be any where else ; and state the simple truth, though he was a considerable time before he chose to acknowledge it even to himself.

The fact was, then, that from the period of his first acquaintance with Caroline Lascelles, he gradually abandoned every other subject of thought ; his intention of ever returning to his family, his father's displeasure at his continued absence, and the perfect cer-

tainty that he never would consent, or even *hear* of his forming so inferior a connexion—nothing disturbed his repose but an occasional doubt, whether or not his attachment was returned by the fair object of it.

In this manner more than a month passed away, during which time, on pretence of shooting, he contrived to spend a great part of every day at the house of Mr. Lascelles. Mr. Lascelles lived but half a mile from Woodhurst Lodge, and as Mrs. Lascelles was extremely pleased with Osmond's condescending and agreeable manners, and much encouraged his dropping in upon them, his evenings were generally passed there.

When he met with Mr. Sackville there, they played a rubber ; but in the general way he used to talk with Mr. Las-

celles, and look at his lovely daughter. He was the common friend of the whole family. Mrs. Lascelles took to him prodigiously, not only for sympathizing with her irritable nerves, but for the honour she conceived his notice conferred ; and Mr. Lascelles seemed to be really interested about him, and to like his company, independently of any extrinsic merit his station in society might attach to it. As he was fond of children, he was always welcome to the little ones, even when he chanced to go without sugar-plums or playthings, which was not often.

With “ aunt Catherine,” too, Osmond was a person of great consideration, from taking so much notice of her eldest godson, a fine little fellow of ten years old ; who, with his brother, about a year

younger, had lately come home for the Christmas holidays. These youthful personages, of an age to know little and care less about the distinction of rank, had struck up a great alliance with Osmond upon the score of his accomplishments in skaiting, cricket, and so on.

There was only one person in this charming family of whose regard for him Osmond was at all dubious, and that was the one, whose favourable opinion he was the most solicitous to obtain.

At the same time that the sparkling vivacity of Caroline afforded strong presumption that her heart was untouched by the passion which already began to affect his own happiness, there was often, in her address to him, a slight degree of

pettishness (unlike her usual sweetness of temper and deportment to every one else), which would have induced him to argue very unfavourably of her sentiments for him, if smiles and blushes, a species of testimony she had it not in her power to repress, did not occasionally persuade him that his presence was not less welcome to her, than it avowedly was to the rest of the family.

His intentions towards her were thrown into that vacillating state, which the merest accident decides, when he one afternoon walked down on his customary visit. He was now on so intimate a footing, that he entered the house at all times, with the privilege of a member of the family.

The dining-room was empty, but the merry voices of the children guided him

to an adjoining apartment, in which they usually took their meals.

He knocked at the door : but as his signal was unheeded, he opened it, and perceived Caroline presiding at the tea table, with all the children surrounding her.

“ Oh, I cannot suffer you to approach, Mr. Lessingham,” she exclaimed, as soon as she caught sight of him ; “ I can scarcely keep peace as it is ; and I am sure when you come—”

“ You would not be so cruel as to say you are not very happy to see me,” said Osmond, interrupting her, and taking a seat by her side.

She attempted some gay reply, but did not succeed. He could perceive that she was a little dejected ; and as Mrs. Lascelles was frequently out of temper,

and quarrelsome with them all in turn, he concluded that some trifle of that kind had occurred to discompose her, and with a view to give her time to recover her serenity, he began to talk with the boys."

"Now, Sir, let me hear you repeat something by heart," said he to Edward.

A discussion took place as to what it was to be. At last, at the suggestion of Charles, he recollected one piece of poetry that he could repeat to perfection, and which had been the means of covering him with glory at school ; and without further preamble, he marched into the middle of the room, made Osmond a bow, and with a very audible voice set off with,

" Turn gentle Hermit of the dale,
And guide my ——"

“ Oh, for pity’s sake, child,” exclaimed Caroline, “ we shall never come to the end of it.”

Poor Edward paused with visible chagrin at the interruption, whilst Osmond, inexpressibly amused with her captiousness, and the boy’s disappointed vanity, could not resist his inclination to laugh.

“ I really cannot exactly see what there is so very amusing,” said she, rather gravely ; and she looked so beautiful in her displeasure, that it was with some effort he subdued the impulse that tempted him to seize her hand, and try to soothe away her vexation.

Edward now interposed to know whether he was to proceed with the Hermit, assuring them that they would be charmed with it—“ Sha’n’t I go on, sister ?”

“ No, certainly not. It is time to go to bed.”

“ Dear me, sister, how cross you are to-night,” said Charles ; rather unfortunately turning to Osmond to second his opinion, with, “ Isn’t she, Sir ?”

“ Charles, what nonsense !” said she.

Her voice faltered as she spoke. Osmond turned to look at her with more attention, and perceived with surprise that her eyes were suffused with tears.

He took her hand.—“ I fear you are not well,” said he.

She withdrew her hand, but gently, and at the same time smiling, she assured him that she was quite well. “ But the cares of the household have devolved upon me,” she added, “ for mamma is very poorly, and has not been out of her room to-day, and

my father and aunt Catharine are gone to spend a few days with our relations at C—, and—and—why nobody is always in the same spirits, you know.”

She paused, as if for Osmond to say something, or to relax the fixed and penetrating gaze with which he had not ceased to behold her, while she was speaking. But at last, a little impatient of his silence, for he was still studying her as an enigma,

“Come now,” she continued, “say something, will you—or are you contemplating me, as Werter did the interesting Charlotte, made I forget how many times more interesting by cutting bread and butter for the children.”

“Could you contemplate me as Werter,” he replied, with as much mean-

ing as he could throw into so simple an interrogation.

She coloured, but assuming a sprightly air,

“ I cannot say what I could do,” said she, “ if time permitted ; but at present I must see some of these people disposed of for the night ; you will therefore give me leave to postpone studying how far, and wherein you resemble the accomplished Werter.”

“ But you will return to me again,” said he, detaining her from flying off with the little tribe.

“ I will leave Charles and Edward to entertain you,” she replied, not choosing to listen to his intreaties that she would return ; and she then left him with the two eldest boys, but so ill-disposed to make himself pleasant to

them, that Charles more than once complained of Mr. Lessingham being “as cross as Carry; and he could not think what had come to them both.”

Their wearisomeness of Osmond’s stupidity at length led them to retreat, to find what pastime they could elsewhere.

He was getting quite angry with Caroline for her desertion, and on the point of abusing her for a little coquette, when the door half opened, and her lovely face appeared at it, though only for a moment, and to exclaim, “The boys are not here!” She was off again immediately.

But Osmond was not to be thus foiled—he determined that she *should* oblige him with her society, and quickly following, he overtook her just as she was ascending the staircase.

She could not do less than be very angry at his taking the liberty of interrupting her; but, nevertheless, suffered herself to be prevailed upon to return with him.

When he had closed the door, and seated her,

“Tell me, Caroline,” said he, “how is it that you feel this reluctance to oblige me with your company? You are kind and affectionate to every one but me;” and he spoke as he felt—really hurt.

She assumed, upon this, a more serious look.

“I never intended to offend you, Mr. Lessingham,” said she, “but surely—” she stopt—

“Surely, what, Caroline?”

“Nothing!” and she looked vexed and uneasy.

Osmond was greatly agitated, and felt it to be almost impossible to refrain from clasping her to his heart, so assured was he that her emotion betrayed the power he possessed over her peace. But the sweet consciousness which trembled in every feature, seemed an appeal to his forbearance, and he restrained himself to taking her hand.

She struggled to withdraw it; he felt as if he deserved better treatment; and proudly relinquishing it,

“By all means, if so simple a freedom displeases you,” said he.

Her lips quivered with agitation. “And what have I said now?” she gently murmured.

“What have you said now?” repeated Osmond, with acrimony—but the next moment ashamed of the vio-

lence into which his furious passions were betraying him, he again, with the utmost tenderness, took her hand, which she did not now withdraw : but looking here and there in beautiful confusion, as if for some retreat from his observation—

“ You really tease me too much,” said she.

“ Tease you, Caroline !” he repeated with energy—“ Tease you, my—*love* !” at last he added.

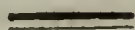
The word was uttered, and nothing now remained but to remove the displeasure which so presumptuous an epithet would have justified, had it not been as sincere as it was impassioned.

“ Yes—my love !” he continued, pressing with fervour alternately to his lips and to his heart, a hand which

might indeed have rivalled ‘the white wonder of dear Juliet’s.’ “Suffer me to say my love! Will you, Caroline? Nay, do not turn from me—only one smile—let me see one smile.” And he gently removed the hand which veiled from him the seraph face. Like violets wet with dew, the deep blue of those melting eyes for a moment met his enraptured glance,—and the smile he implored was granted him; but the charming novice, abashed by the avowal it implied—but half revealed it—and involuntarily concealed upon his bosom her eloquent face.

He clasped her—ah with what fervour!—as his own.

CHAP. XIII.



MARRIAGE had not been much the subject of Osmond's thoughts previous to this period; but the innocence, the simplicity of Caroline, her respectable situation in life, her father's protection, and the horror with which Osmond himself would have contemplated her ruin, assured him in the consideration of an instant, that she was only to be approached with the most honourable intentions. The sanction of her father to their engagement was all, therefore, that now remained to confirm it.

Mr. Lascelles received Osmond's ac-

knowledgment of attachment to his daughter rather as matter of amusement than as a subject worthy of serious consideration. “Caroline,” he said, “was so much younger in manner even than in years, that Mr. Lessingham must excuse him, but he could not contemplate her as the object of any man’s serious attentions without a smile.”

To this Osmond opposed the probity of his intentions; the unalterable nature and strength of his passion for her, the ardour of his hopes, and all the topics which lovers usually press in such cases.

Mr. Lascelles replied with nearly the same arguments respecting her youth and childish manners, adding an intreaty that Osmond would not endeavour to unsettle her mind at so early an age, by

introducing to her notice, ideas, which it would be quite time enough for her to consider some years hence.

However, as his visits were still permitted upon the same terms of intimacy, it was not long before his assiduities created for him so strong an interest in the heart of Caroline, that she herself became an advocate in his behalf with her father. “ Her happiness was at stake,” she told him, with tears in those eyes which had hitherto beamed upon him only with sprightliness and joy.

The tenderness of the parent prevailed over the prudence of the man, and at length he consented to the connexion ; stipulating, however, that at present it must be considered only as a thing that *might* happen some time hence, but certainly not to lead to any

irrevocable engagement till time had shewn the stability of Mr. Lessingham's attachment, and put it more in his own power to decide for himself in so important a measure, than Mr. Lascelles conceived it was at present. They both yielded a ready assent to this condition, satisfied to obtain the privilege of enjoying each other's society without restraint.

For a time—alas ! but a very short time—Osmond found perfect bliss in the affection of Caroline, which was as fervently felt, and as strongly developed, as could be expected from the nature of her easy, happy disposition. With her, to love, was simply and really to *love*. To be fond, tender, kind, confiding. No doubt, no distrust—nothing approaching to jealousy disturbed her

quiet, or interrupted the flow of her gaiety. With him, on the contrary, to love—was not merely to be agitated with one tremendous passion, but with many. Jealousy, with all her frightful train of hopes, fears, hatred, revenge—all these by turns usurped dominion over him. Well, indeed, has Rochefoucault said, “that to judge of love by its effects, it is more like hatred than love.”

There was a ferocity, an intenseness in the passion he felt, and which, in general, marks the love of ardent and impetuous souls, which was quite incomprehensible, apparently, to Caroline.

Though he felt as if he could lay down his life to do her service, though he existed but in her presence, he was never satisfied with her long together.

By some strange infatuation, he was always on the watch for occasions of quarrelling with her. Whence can arise, in human creatures, this disposition to disturb the peace of those they love, and by whom they ought to have the deepest conviction that they are themselves beloved? Whence can proceed that mysterious propensity, which impels the victim of passion to be for ever sounding the unfathomable depths of human feeling, to find materials for its own misery?

It seemed to Osmond that when Caroline was calm and tranquil, she was not loving him. He would have had her always enthusiastic; always thinking of him; living but for him. The sprightliness of her manners, when exerted for his amusement, fascinated him beyond description; but it gave him tortures

inexpressible if she dared to smile or be animated for any one else. He could scarcely bear that she should be civil to Mr. Sackville, and to laugh or joke with him, always appeared to him as little less than an insult.

On every little instance of this kind, he brooded over his imaginary wrongs, till he persuaded himself that he was unkindly, lightly, nay, cruelly treated by her ; that she was too frivolous, too coquettish, to be sensible of the value of his love ; that she was the worthless cause to him of indescribable misery, and that he should do well to renounce her entirely. In short, he many times so worked upon his fiery, restless temperament, that he believed he *did*, and that he *ought* to hate her. Yet the moment of reconciliation, the moment

when her soft arms were twined around his neck, and her sweet lips were pressed to his cheek, well—well repaid his sufferings ; and then he could smile as he strained her to his heart, and spurn the world, and all that it contained, when put in competition with the love of Caroline.

In this state of feeling the winter passed, and Osmond's time and thoughts being wholly employed by the passion which absorbed him, he withdrew himself as much as possible from all society, all acquaintance but the Lascelles's.

He had indeed one friend, or rather companion, whose notice he would have been very happy to have avoided, if possible ; but finding him upon rather intimate terms with the Lascelles' family, and liable to be thrown frequently

in his way, during his constant visits there, he had hardly a choice in accepting the civilities and attention that were heaped upon him, by a young man of the name of Alston, a slight acquaintance with whom he had contracted at college ; and who, having been recently ordained, had settled in the neighbourhood of Woodhurst, upon the curacy of an adjoining village. There was one advantage he derived from the intimacy of Alston with the Lascelles's, which arose from the great proficiency of the former in the science of whist : a circumstance that strongly recommended him to the notice of Mrs. Lascelles ; and as he paid no other regard to Caroline, than occasionally to remark to Osmond that she was a pretty girl, and supplying his place at the card table, left him more opportunity of talking with her,

Osmond had no dislike to his getting upon terms of intimacy there.

He was, of course, not long a stranger to their engagement : but he made very few remarks upon it ; such as did escape him, implied, as Osmond thought, no approbation of the measure ; but as for the first fortnight after Alston's knowledge of their attachment, Caroline and he happened to be upon particularly happy and comfortable terms together, Osmond paid no attention whatever to his opinion upon the subject.

A fortnight was now, indeed, an unusually long time for Osmond to be easy and satisfied with her. At the end of this period, he went to her one morning with a new publication of light literature, such as he had been in the habit of reading to her, or recommending to her perusal. He had made it his

first care, as soon as he felt authorized to do so, to take her out of the hands of Mr. Elton, and substituting more attractive studies in the room of the Roman Emperors, he had, he flattered himself, made some advances in cultivating her taste, and inspiring her with a love of reading.

She had a most uncommonly acute, and intelligent mind; she seized at once the leading points of any subject, but she dwelt upon none. Vivacity and spirit were the predominant features of her intellectual character; wit and cleverness of remark were sure to win her smile; and delicacy, and tenderness of sentiment her sigh; but either was so light, so evanescent, so instantly yielded to the next impression, be it what it might, that, sometimes irritated with her volatility, Osmond shut the book in

despair, and gave himself up to the utmost displeasure.

On the morning alluded to, he found her in the most joyous spirits, with a note in her hand, which she told him she had just received from her cousin Mrs. Milner, a young married woman residing at C—, a village about six miles distant.

“And do you know, Osmond,” she continued in her usual sprightly style of communicating any intelligence, “that Elizabeth is going to christen the baby next week, and she has persuaded Mr. Milner to let her give a dance.”

“Well, and what then?”

“What then! why shall you not like to go? and don’t you love dancing?”

“Not much,” he replied, for the idea of her entering into the familiarity of such an amusement with any man but

himself was far from an agreeable one. But he could not bear to see the disappointment which spread itself over her countenance at his answer ; so with a smile, he bid her to dispose of him upon the occasion as she wished ; and having, for a little time, talked the matter over, he proposed, when he thought it had been sufficiently discussed, to read some favourite passages to her from a very delightful work which he had brought for her perusal : and he took the volume from his pocket.

She took her work, and sat down, as if disposed to be attentive ; but he could perceive that it was with an effort, and that her thoughts were wandering after the dance—a subject he utterly abominated.

He endeavoured to excite her remarks as he went along ; and she made one

or two which were apposite enough : but her manner was *distract*, and he felt that both he and his book were, at that moment, uninteresting to her.

It required but very little to induce him to throw it away at once, and that *very little* soon arrived ; for, taking advantage of a pause he made to consider a sentiment which struck him as particularly beautiful,—

“ I cannot think, Osmond,” said she, “ where Elizabeth will get beaux enough for a dance, unless Mr. Milner happens to know any of the officers in the barracks at D—, and I rather think he does, and if so——Dear Osmond, what is the matter ?” she continued, startled by the impetuosity with which he flung the volume upon the table.

But she knew enough of his impetuous temper, to understand that she had

offended, and perceiving how, she, with her invariable sweetness of disposition, began to propitiate, by begging him to proceed, and promising to be more attentive.

“No—no, Caroline,” he replied, with impatience, “such promises are worth nothing. If your attention is not involuntarily caught and captivated by such a production as this, you have it not in you, and all the labour in the world would not produce it.”

She looked abashed and disconcerted, but said nothing; whilst Osmond, disappointed and discontented, resumed his book, and read, or seemed to read it to himself. She, in the meanwhile, silently continued her work, waiting as it should seem his pleasure.

Such a situation of discomfort was very common with them in their morn-

ing studies ; but in the present instance his ill humour was considerably increased by the gnawings of jealousy, which the prospect of this dance, and its accompaniments of officers, &c. &c. excited.

It was in vain he attempted to read ; his thoughts were all in confusion.

“ And what officers does Mr. Milner know, pray ?” at last he said, taking his eyes off the book, and turning them with no very gentle expression upon her.

“ I believe he is acquainted with Capt. Smith,” she meekly replied ; “ I don’t know of any one else.”

“ How unfortunate !” said he, with a taunting smile : “ such a dismal circumstance might well disturb your attention, and make you insensible to every thing else.” Every word he uttered served, as in the case of all angry persons, but to irritate him still more—and he con-

tinued to exhaust his anger in a succession of sarcasms, till her gentle nature could support it no longer, and the tears, which had long been trembling in her eyes, were at last trickling down her cheeks.

This was a sight at once to disarm his wrath, and make him hate himself for having occasioned it. Often, indeed, had he loathed the furious passions which impelled him to disturb the peace, and torture the heart of this sweet girl! Often had he vowed to free himself from their dominion! Often had he thrown himself at her feet, and besought her to forgive him! He did so at that moment—and she accorded him her pardon, instantly — willingly ;—and then, solicitous only to atone, and to give her pleasure, he *would* talk of this intended dance—he constrained himself to par-

ticipate in the delight it appeared to afford her ; and, hoping in his secret soul that Mr. Milner might find insuperable difficulties in meeting with any Captains from the garrison of D—to join his party, and stipulating that she was to dance with him every dance excepting two, which for the sake of avoiding impertinent observation it might be as well to devote to any one else,—he prevailed upon himself to believe that they really might enjoy a pleasant evening. He could not, however, by any effort of self-command, bring himself to anticipate much delight from this circumstance. Caroline was so attractive, not merely on account of her beauty, decided and superior as it was, but from her *naïveté* and archness of manner, and the innate elegance and grace which so peculiarly distinguished

her, that he felt assured it would be impossible to seclude her from being the object of marked attention, to whatever gentleman she chanced to be in company with.

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